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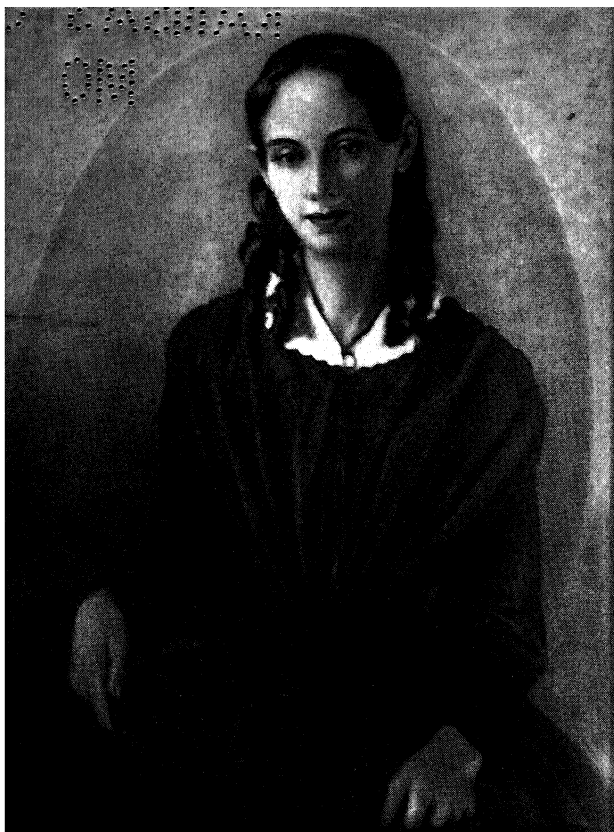






LYDIA PINKHAM

IS HER NAME



Lydia E. Pinkham at twenty-five

*Lydia Pinkham*

IS HER NAME

BY JEAN BURTON



ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK • 1949

*FARRAR, STRAUS AND COMPANY*

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LYDIA PINKHAM

IS HER NAME



# I



## LYDIA ESTES PINK-

ham, who was born twenty miles from Boston but seldom traveled that far, found it possible within a narrow orbit to pursue a life full of mental and moral stimulation.

Faced with two simultaneous crises—her husband's bankruptcy and a nationwide financial panic—she rose to the occasion more than adequately by founding an enterprise that was unique in its time and may be so considered still. She became, as all the world soon knew, America's first successful businesswoman, and she introduced an entirely new kind of advertising which was at the same time a satisfying form of self-expression. She wrote the first reliable facts-of-life treatise; distributed by the millions, its effect was incalculable. But her main contribution to public thought was a truly revolu-

tionary concept: namely, that one could be healthy though female.

Mrs. Pinkham was fully aware of these varied distinctions and she regarded them calmly. For one thing, she came of a long line of New England Quakers whose women had always been considered, theoretically at least, equal partners with men. For another, it was no new experience for her to be in the public eye.

She was born Lydia Estes on February 9, 1819, in a farmhouse outside Lynn, which might sound dull but was not. Her parents, William and Rebecca Estes, were a well-to-do and militantly independent-minded pair whose interests fortunately coincided. The Estes genealogy traced the origin of the family to a scion of the Italian house of Este who, having backed the wrong side in an inter-city feud, found it prudent to remove himself as far as England. The first of his descendants to arrive in America some centuries later, around 1676, was Matthew Estes of Dover, a master mariner and a Quaker. When he died he left sizable properties in both Lynn and Salem, and these were divided between his male and female heirs with scrupulous impartiality.



L Y D I A P I N K H A M

*"To grandddaughter Philadelphia, daughter of my son John, when eighteen, a feather bed, bedstead and furniture, my silver cup, 2 silver spoons, a black trunk, a gilt trunk and £5 in money.*

*"To grandddaughter Hannah, daughter of my son John, when eighteen, my silver tankard, two silver spoons, 1 black and 1 yellow trunk, gilt, and £5; also movable gifts out of the estate at Salem."*

The bulk of the houses and land went to John's family; but "if he die leaving a widow, then all to go to her and said children." When John died in 1723, administration was accordingly granted his widow, a highly unusual proceeding. But Hannah proved quite equal to her new responsibilities. "I, Hannah, widow of John Estes, late of Lynn, deceased, having a right of improvement to the above premises by virtue of the will of my father-in-law Matthew Estes, do quitclaim the same—" she would set forth precisely. Under the common law, women were not, in the legal sense, persons; but from the earliest records, Estes wives, widows and daughters comported themselves just as if they *were* persons—witnessing documents, buying and selling, keeping

little shops of one kind or another in the home, making inventories, and shrewdly managing properties that were steadily growing in extent. By the third generation, what with tireless clearing of stony ground and draining of swamps, they had accumulated a considerable acreage, as well as houses and livestock. Estes husbands and wives made a point of deeding property jointly whenever occasion arose, and it frequently happened that a man would appoint his wife sole executrix of his will. Ahijah Estes, a hatter of Salem (the first of the family to be styled "Gentleman"), varied this by appointing his daughter Mary executrix, passing over his son; and Mary when she came to make her own will named her sister Elizabeth. In brief, there had been competent businesswomen among the Esteses from 1700 on, and probably before.

The Estes men were farmers, wagonmakers, carpenters, millers, blacksmiths, hatters, coopers, saddle makers, tanners. When the shoe industry began to flourish in Lynn, some became cordwainers, leather dealers, and manufacturers of shoe trimmings. A few were ministers in the Society of Friends, to which the entire connection still ad-

hered. An Estes in 1722 had "for love and good will" deeded to "ye people of God, called Quakers, in Lynn" land near the Town Common "in which to bury their dead, and to erect a meeting-house thereon." The Quakers formed a rather aloof group, keeping much to themselves to avoid the contaminations of the world, marrying nearly always inside the faith, and seeing to it that their children attended no school but the Friends' own—incidentally, Lynn's first sectarian school. It had been built in 1777, after which the elders asked, and by means of gentle but unremitting pressure finally obtained, an allowance from public funds for its support. The Quakers' minds might be fixed on higher things, but when it came to business negotiations no one ever claimed that they could not, in the local phrase, tell a hawk from a hand-saw.

By this time the Estes were a spreading and multitudinous clan, thrifty, long-lived and prolific, with the usual incidence of second and third wives. They were as devout a Quaker family as could be found in the whole of New England, but there was observable in them, all the same, a certain latitude in the interpretation of doctrine. Thus an

Estes ancestor as early as 1687 had acquired a songbook and, blandly ignoring the rigid Quaker injunction against music, refused to see anything wrong in it—"laying apart," he added hastily, "ungodly songs and ballards, which tend only to the nourishing of vice and corrupting of youth."

Lydia's grandmother in 1786 bequeathed to two maiden daughters her best beds and furniture, "also the use, improvements, and income of my land in Trundle rock pasture." She had been a good manager, and her estate was valued at over fourteen hundred pounds. But to her son William, for whatever reason (perhaps his bent for disputatiousness had manifested itself early), she pointedly left nothing but "one of the meanest Beds and bedding."

This son, William Estes, was Lydia's father, and he soon improved on his inheritance. In his younger days he became a shoemaker or cordwainer (the word comes from cordovan leather), but by the time Lydia arrived he was farming in a rather leisurely way, not being altogether dependent on it for his family's living. During the war of 1812, before the embargo was clamped down, he

had foresightedly constructed a salt works on the flatlands near his home, an investment which turned out more than satisfactorily. Also the farm he had chosen, near Puddin' Hill with a fine view of wooded countryside, ocean and the Nahant peninsula, lay in the natural path of the city's growth, and could be profitably subdivided and sold.

After the death of his first wife, he married, in 1805, Rebecca Chase, of a Quaker family that had been in America nearly as long as his own. In the next eighteen years she bore him twelve children, and only two of them died in infancy, which in that period marked her as either an exceptionally sensible mother or an exceptionally lucky one. She lived to be eighty-one, keeping a firm grip on things to the last—a clever, articulate, combative old lady. Handsome, too.

William and Rebecca Estes, both very positive personalities, to put it mildly, were what today would be called socially conscious. They were married according to the Quaker ceremony, which did not call for any promise of obedience on the wife's part, but in other respects they soon felt the Quaker way of life too cramping for them. The

rules laid down for every daily act, the vigilant surveillance of the elders, and above all the frustrating sense of being cut off from the main community made them increasingly restive. But when they finally broke away it was on a point of conscience. The Friends, like every other sect, were divided on the question of slavery, many being troubled by a persistent conviction that while the institution was undoubtedly endorsed in the Bible, as they were so often reminded, it nevertheless remained morally dubious.

Officially they recognized no color bar when it came to worship, but if stray Negroes took them at their word there sometimes were awkward scenes in the meetinghouse. Susan B. Anthony, also a birth-right Quaker, a year younger than Lydia and living not far away, noted coldly that when a respectable Negro sought to join her congregation, those nearest him ostentatiously got up and left. "There are three colored girls," she added, "who have been in the habit of attending Friends' meetings where they have lived, but here they are not even allowed to sit on the back seat. One long-faced elder dusted off a seat in the gallery and told them to sit there."

The Estes family was traditionally Abolitionist, having spoken out sharply to this effect all through the period when, as their genealogy puts it, "the cause of slavery seemed as immovable as the eternal hills." True, one of Lydia's great-great-uncles had so far forgotten his principles as to bequeath to his daughter Sarah (along with his gun, writing desk, two-thirds of his "printed books" and all his shop and farming tools) a female slave. But Sarah, of more forthright conviction, liberated her in the first year of the Republic. *"Know all men by these presents that I Sarah Sylvester of Hanover, in the County of Plymouth, widow. Know ye that whereas my Father Matthew Estes late of said Hanover deceased, in his last Will and Testament gave to me a certain Negro girl whose name is Bilhah, aged about 30 years, and from a Religious Scruple of Conscience in me with regard to the justice of keeping mankinde as Slaves, and in consideration of ye good will which I bear towards sd. Bilhah, I do hereby for myself, my heirs, Executors and Administrators, Exonerate, acquit and discharge her, ye sd. Bilhah, from me, my heirs, Executors and Administrators to all intents and purposes whatever.*

*And from any Demands of Property in sd. Bilhah, in Testimony whereof I do hereunto set my hand and seal this twenty-fifth day of the ninth month called September, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six."*

When Lydia was a young girl, the Lynn congregation was still of two minds on the matter. One morning Rebecca Estes, considerably exasperated by all this cautious soul-searching, left the church with almost the first contingent of Come-outers and never went back. The rest of the family followed her lead. At the same time, with unutterable relief, they discarded the Quaker garb. It might please the Friends to describe their dress as plain, but since every garment for man, woman and child had to be specially made so that it would conform to the ordained pattern down to the last button-hole, it could hardly be said to add in any real sense to the simplicity of life.

Theology in the Estes home had never been of the usual lugubrious nature, but from this point on the mental atmosphere became quite exhilarating. Controversy was the children's natural element; persons and books advocating radical views on most



varied topics were their daily companions. As for religion, at that time Swedenborgianism seemed to be chiefly favored by intellectuals and others sheer-  
ing away from orthodoxy. Rebecca Estes adopted it for herself, but with reservations, experience having inclined her to a somewhat wary and skeptical frame of mind. Her children were left free to decide for themselves, and indeed were constantly prodded to that end.

Lydia was the tenth child. Like her older brothers and sisters, she attended the nearest grammar school, where she was fortunate in having an exceptional teacher in the person of Alonzo Lewis. In his spare time he was also the local poet, antiquarian, historian and Abolitionist leader. Understandably repelled by the schoolroom methods then customary, Lewis experimented mildly with Bronson Alcott's ideas on progressive education, proceeding on the assumption that his little charges possessed a better nature to which appeal might be made. Lydia, who decided at an early age that she would be a teacher herself when she grew up, studied his system to good effect.

Most girls in the 1830's were content, or had to

be content, with a few months at school during the winter when they learned to read and write and do simple sums. (It was a well-known fact that the female brain could not grasp any higher branch of mathematics; thus it was a great day in 1838 when Mrs. Emma Willard, at her Select Seminary for Females, held a public examination at which "a young Lady passed brilliantly in Geometry.") But when Lydia was through with grammar school, she went on to enter Lynn Academy, on the south side of the Common, and in due course graduated with honors. The Academy's scholastic standards were high enough to make it respected throughout New England, so Lydia Estes could count herself one of a fortunate few. She not only gained the best education within reach—much superior to anything a Female Seminary could offer—but at the same time prepared for an independent career, all as a matter of course and backed by her entire family. She had no apoplectic father to battle and no domestic consternation to overcome, such as were reported with depressing frequency by ambitious young women not only then, but for a good many decades to come.

Lynn, prosperous, leafy and beautiful, was close

enough to Boston to attract the best visiting lecturers, and many celebrities appeared there from time to time. Lydia was used to greeting distinguished visitors. One of their neighbors was James N. Buffum, a noble and truculent old Quaker whose home was one of the few in that locality used as an actual station of the slave underground. He was wealthy, having been the first to introduce labor-saving machinery in the shoe industry, and thus was able to indulge his passion for attending conventions far and near in the United States, as well as setting off for Europe whenever a promising group assembled in the interests of his favorite causes—anti-slavery, peace, temperance, labor or women's rights. In 1831 William Lloyd Garrison of *The Liberator* visited him for the first time and became a life-long friend of the Estes, along with Nathaniel P. Rogers of the *Herald of Freedom*. Others who dropped in at the Estes home whenever they found themselves in Lynn were Wendell Phillips (who delivered his first fighting Abolitionist speech there in 1837), the radical ex-clergyman Parker Pillsbury and the Quaker poet John Green-

leaf Whittier, a connection of Mrs. Estes' by marriage.

The Estes family enjoyed long sessions of argumentative talk with all comers, examining their own party tactics and leaders with a critical eye. Which was more effective, direct action or a policy of infiltration? Whose recent speeches betrayed a spineless tendency to compromise? In addition there were pro-slavery demonstrations to be picketed and anti-slavery meetings to be supported in strength; both were apt to be turbulent and attended at some personal risk. In such encounters the Abolitionist spokesmen usually bore themselves very creditably, sometimes not. Miss Lydia Estes had the advantage of being able to study them in her own home as well as on the platform, idiosyncrasies and all. She grew up with no particular awe for great reputations, whether in the field of religion, politics, or, as it transpired, medicine.

The Estes family were also incipient feminists, years before the word was coined. A Lynn branch of the Female Anti-Slavery Society, founded by Lucretia Mott and regarded as the unofficial origin of the feminist movement as well, was formed in 1836.

Rebecca Estes was on its Board of Managers, her daughters Lydia and Gulielma Maria (named for the wife of William Penn, not for some remote Italian ancestress) were active members for the duration, and little Abby Kelley was secretary. Miss Kelley, later famed throughout the land as a dynamic lecturer, became the first woman in Massachusetts to address a mixed audience of men and women. The agitation of the male delegates on this occasion was very great, so much so that the local Abolitionist movement was split from top to bottom. The Estes family saw her through the clamorous début that launched her on a public career. In the same spirit they applauded the beautiful Grimké sisters when they appeared before a Lynn convention to explain the many similarities they had observed between the status of Negroes and that of sheltered Southern gentlewomen, such as themselves. The details were of interest, but the main thesis, of course, was not original with them. "How did woman first become subject to man, as she now is all over the world?" inquired Mr. Bennett of the New York *Herald*. "By her nature, her sex; just as the Negro is and always will be to the

end of time, inferior to the white race and therefore, doomed to subjection." He added, in a softer tone, that both were happiest in this state.

Living on Union Street in Lynn was one escaped slave who had not found it so: Frederick Douglass, now star orator for the Abolitionists. He was an ambitious man, not a full-blooded Negro, but very dark, very dignified, self-educated, and with a voice that would melt a heart of stone. In his travels through Europe and the States, these days, he was accustomed to dine with the best people, and he did not allow himself to be patronized.

Douglass was a valued friend of the Estes and of their neighbors the Singing Hutchinsons, a celebrated quartet who toured the United States dispensing musical propaganda for such causes as Abolition, Woman Suffrage, and Temperance, and whose specialty was improvising long ballads on topics of the day—a species of New England Calypso. It was the Hutchinsons' practice, and very contemporary it sounds, to cancel concert engagements if they found that Negroes would not be admitted. They had made this a firm ruling ever since the disturbance caused when Lucretia Mott—

who in social position as well as character was absolutely unassailable—attended their performance in Philadelphia and invited a cultivated mulatto to sit with her party of wealthy Quakers. The Hutchinson boys, as they said, loved Fred Douglass like a brother, and they would not permit his race to be insulted at any concert of theirs.

Both Lydia and Gulielma Estes figured, in Douglass' behalf, in episodes that would probably reach the headlines even today. The mildest occurred when Douglass was warned not to go through with a lecture that he had announced. Lydia and Gulielma resurrected their Quaker gowns and bonnets and joined a group of young women of that faith who gravely surrounded the Negro on his way to and from the lecture hall. They were heckled by an unfriendly crowd, but not molested.

Then, one day in 1842, Gulielma Estes walked circumspectly down the street on Douglass' arm, just as she would have done with any other friend of the family. It ended with her withdrawing from the Methodist Church, which she had briefly joined under the impression that its anti-slavery stand was more definite than appeared on closer in-

spection. (For a time the younger Estes tried out various denominations in this way.) When her pastor expressed himself as very disagreeably affected by the incident, instead of being covered with shame she called upon him, accompanied by her sister Lydia and a young cousin named Aroline Chase, to state her position in full. In answer to one question pressed by this logical trio, the pastor conceded that he did expect to meet with colored persons in heaven. In the meantime he felt that he could with propriety visit them when sick to offer religious counsel, and, after a little hesitation, admit them to his church when well ("but I think they ought to sit by themselves"). Further than this, on the earthly plane, he was not prepared to go.

When the Eastern Railroad was built through Lynn, in 1838, it was complete with all modern amenities, including a Jim Crow car. Douglass, as a point of principle, always boarded the "white car"; and when told to move, it was his habit to reply, in a tone of courteous surprise, that he found his seat perfectly comfortable. Miss Lydia Estes (then a schoolteacher according to plan, and known by sight to everyone in the car) once found



herself on the same bench with him, and they had entered into conversation when the conductor, breathing fire, bore down to eject the Negro. But he had to pass her first, and she declined to move. In the end, as always happened, the conductor found eager helpers and Douglass was removed by force; but Lydia had made her opinion of the whole proceeding sufficiently clear.

In the end, Douglass went on triumphantly to wider fields, but when he returned to Lynn he was always a welcome visitor both in the Estes home and in Lydia's after her marriage. Incidentally it was Lydia who taught Douglass' wife to read. It might at first appear odd that Douglass should not attend to this himself, but the fact was that the supporters of women's rights were considerably more loyal to him than he proved to be to them. After the Civil War, when Negro men were given the vote but women, white or black, were not, Douglass rather abruptly withdrew his support from their movement, appearing to feel that progress had now gone as far as was really desirable. It was all very disillusioning, and ended many a

beautiful friendship. But of course this was more than twenty years in the future.

Lydia Estes was a composed and striking-looking young woman, erect, very tall (five feet ten or so), with reddish hair and fine dark eyes. While she taught in Lynn she continued to live at home, finding her family circle entirely congenial, and to take part in public events as before.

There was a Debating Society in Lynn for the consideration of "grave questions," but naturally it was for men only. Also, it was excessively dull. After thinking this over for some time, Miss Estes organized a rival and vastly more spirited forum known as the Freeman's Institute, which represented the *avant-garde* of Lynn. "On the evening of January 18th, 1843," she wrote, having been unanimously chosen as secretary, "an assembly of persons, male and female, met at Richards' Hall to consider the fitness of uniting in an association for the free discussion of such subjects as might be deemed worthy of remark, untrammelled by the usual rules and forms of debating societies."

The Freeman's Institute was not, as its name might suggest, primarily an Abolitionist group, but

it went without saying that everyone who belonged was right-minded on this question. At the first meeting Frederick Douglass was elected president *pro tem*, and the constitution, written out in Miss Estes' beautiful copperplate hand, expressly provided that "No person shall be excluded from full participation in any of the operations of this Society on account of *sex, complexion, or religious or political opinions.*"

There were ninety members in all, including twenty-seven women of whom five bore the surname Estes. The discussions were, as the young secretary had hoped, "untrammelled," and their range, considering that they took place over a hundred years ago in a conservative New England community, was tolerably startling. But then the Freeman's Institute would attract only emancipated minds.

"Has the institution of church organization been beneficial to mankind?"

"Has the institution of the clergy been beneficial to mankind?"

"Have the missionary enterprizes of the pro-

fessed friends of the church been productive of good?"

"Is there conclusive proof that the whole human race has descended from a common origin?" (It was curious that this problem should engage them, sixteen years before Darwin's *Origin of Species*.)

"Has the human race been from its origin progressive?"

"Is the institution of the State subversive of the Rights of Man?"

"Is the individual under any obligation to sustain the institution of the State or may he at pleasure withdraw from it?" (This anticipated Thoreau.)

"Could society exist and flourish if all punishment were abolished?"

"Would it be a beneficial arrangement to the community to have those clergymen who advocate judicial murder appointed hangmen of the State?" (The affirmative was upheld by the fiery Mr. Buffum.)

"Which state of society is preferable, that which now exists, an absolute community of property and interest, or an association which admits of individ-

ual ownership of property included in that of the community?"

"Is it the rightful prerogative of man to exercise control over woman?"

"Ought the right of suffrage to be extended to woman?"

The Freeman's Institute was important in Lydia Estes' life for more than one reason. Among its forward-looking younger members was a recent newcomer to Lynn, by name Isaac Pinkham. Finding that they had so many interests in common, he and Lydia were married in September of the same year.

It was a very suitable match; though a comparative stranger, Isaac's credentials were of the best. He came of pre-Revolutionary stock and much the same background as her own. Richard Pinkham or Pinkhame, the American ancestor, had been one of the signers when the people of Dover Point, New Hampshire, established their first formal government in 1640. He was a man of some standing in the community, as was attested by a proclamation eight years later: "It is this day ordered by a publique Towne meeting that Richard Pinkham shall beat the drum on the Lord's Day to give notice for

the time of meeting, and to sweepe the Meeting house, for the which he shall be allowed six bushels of Indian corn for his pay this yeare, and to be free of the rates."

As an added distinction, the Pinkham family history included a witch; a young and comely witch, named Mary Tyler. In 1692 she was courted by one Timothy Swan; she spurned his attentions, and he retaliated by having her arrested and taken by oxcart to Salem to stand trial on two counts. First, that she had wickedly made a covenant with the devil; and second, that she had practiced certain detestable arts on Master Timothy, causing him to be tortured and afflicted till he pined and wasted away. The jury found her guilty and sentenced her to death, but happily the witchcraft hysteria was beginning to wane. After languishing in jail all summer, she was reprieved, actually awarded damages (£8-14s.), and allowed to return to her home, Boxford House. Here she frequently reappeared during the next three centuries as an unalarming and rather attractive ghost, who liked to open trunks in the attic and rustle among their yellowing papers.

Many of Richard's children and most of his grandchildren and later descendants were Quakers, but not all. Some fought in the French and Indian Wars; and during the Revolutionary War, Captain Joseph Pinkham was one of the committee of three appointed to supply the state with soldiers. Isaac's own grandfather, Daniel, served with signal honor in the regiment of the New Hampshire line.

The Pinkhams had a reputation for being cautious, hard-headed and men of few words. ("Never bother a Pinkham when he is thinking," was a piece of sage New Hampshire advice.) Having thought matters out, they were stubborn; quite a number had to be disowned by the Quakers because they needs must marry "outside meeting." They set great store by a college education, and more of them were found in the white-collar professions than was the case with the Estes.

Isaac was born at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on Christmas Day, 1815. He had tried and discarded several trading ventures (having been at one time, it was said, in the whale-oil business) before taking up his present occupation of shoe manufacturer. He was a widower when Lydia met him, his

first wife, Mary Shaw of Lynn, having died about a year earlier, leaving him with one little girl, Frances Ellen. He was now twenty-nine, Lydia twenty-four.

Mr. Pinkham was a most engaging individual, short, plump, mild of manner and meticulously polite (it was later remarked that he always spoke politely even to his own children, which was unusual enough in that period to cause comment), and wearing an habitual expression of solemn, bright-eyed expectancy. He was a man who could see hopeful business possibilities in practically every direction, and it was his intention to make a great deal of money. Once or twice he came very close. If he had succeeded, Mrs. Lydia Pinkham, as his wife, would have been a person of highest consequence in Lynn, Massachusetts; but who, outside Lynn, would ever have heard her name?



## II



### THE NEW MRS.

Pinkham's girlhood had been far from uneventful, and neither she nor her husband had the slightest intention of settling down to a humdrum domestic round. They maintained all their former interests in addition to new ones acquired from year to year, keeping briskly up with the times, when they were not considerably ahead of them. In other respects, too, they were a singularly attached and congenial pair, and this was the more striking as circumstances frequently seemed conspiring to strain family loyalty to the limit. Through adversities, griefs and anxious times, however, they not only backed each other staunchly, but each continued to look proudly on the other as a most remarkable person.

The distressing fact was that for thirty years the Pinkhams lived on great expectations.

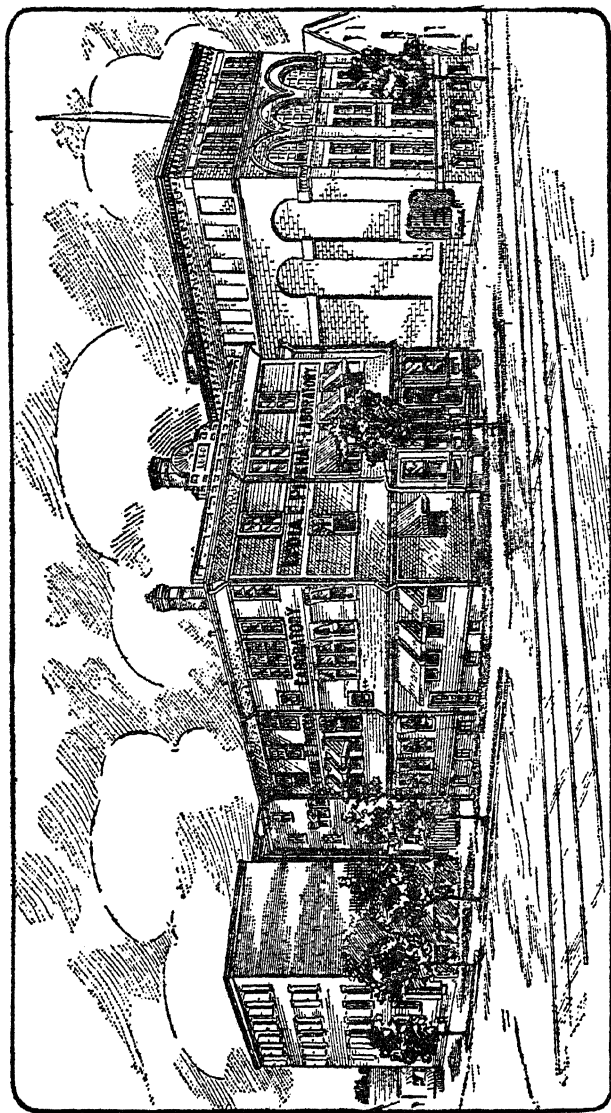
Lydia's father loaned them the money to buy their

first home. When old Mr. Estes died in 1848, Isaac undertook to sell off his estate lot by lot. At the time nothing could have looked more promising. As an auspicious beginning, the railroad had already been built right across the farm. In Isaac's opinion the property would eventually be Lynn's main business district, and he was perfectly right; the original homestead stood on what was soon the busy corner of Broad and Estes Streets. The only drawback lay in his timing, which in turn was conditioned by a total absence of ready cash. Others made money on his transactions, but the upshot was that the Pinkhams could not even keep their own home. They mortgaged it and moved to a two-family house with a sharp-pitched roof, known locally as the Old Lightning-Splitter. It stood in Wyoma Village, on the outskirts of Lynn.

This was looked on as nothing more serious than a temporary setback. They held their heads as high as ever, and gradually Isaac, who in his quiet way was phenomenally pertinacious, established himself as a real estate dealer on a quite ambitious scale. On paper, at least, he became one of the most prosperous men in Lynn. Through the years he bought up

options steadily, till he held precarious title to enough land to justify his being respectfully addressed as "Squire Pinkham." When attending the winter series of improving lectures at the Lynn Lyceum, he was, if rather short and portly beside his tall, spare wife, a dignified figure in his Prince Albert coat and top hat. (His manners and dress always remained a shade more punctilious than Lynn was used to, and he invariably wore black, an odd choice in so optimistic a man.) But the only way to finance his expanding operations was to borrow heavily at ruinous interest, so that no matter how the options multiplied, there was never much actual spending money left over for the family. Few situations in life could be more trying.

Their three sons were born in Lynn—Charles Hacker in 1844; Daniel Rogers (the second name was in memory of Nathaniel P. Rogers) in 1849; and William Henry in 1852. There was also a baby that died in its second year. The youngest child and only daughter, Aroline Chase, was born in 1857 at Bedford, Massachusetts, where the family spent a few bleak years on a farm during a period when their fortunes touched an all-time low. It does not



The Lydia E. Pinkham Laboratory at Lynn, Massachusetts.

appear that Mrs. Pinkham ever doubted for a minute that her husband's judgment would be triumphantly vindicated in the end, but while in Bedford she set down certain "Rules for Success in Business" for her sons, and one of these may have reflected a temporarily disheartened mood. "A sure six-pence," she wrote, "is better than a doubtful shilling, which motto be governed by." But she was never really governed by that prudent motto herself. At the end of her thirty-year ordeal she was ready, with undiminished vigor, to undertake a much bigger gamble than any of Isaac's.

Their affairs picked up so that they were able to return to Lynn shortly before the Civil War. Mrs. Pinkham continued to run her household competently on a very restricted budget, saw to it that her children had roughage in their diet and cheerful conversation at meals to aid the digestive juices (she had read the works of Sylvester Graham), and encouraged them to use their brains. They were a close-knit family, full of candid mutual admiration.

Charlie, the eldest, was already in high school. All four in turn went through the Lynn High

School at the head of their respective classes, attaching every medal and honor in sight. The boys also did odd jobs for the neighbors after school, sold popcorn and fruit at fairs, and in general showed themselves to be up and coming. Mrs. Pinkham helped them with their lessons (an old marble-covered notebook contains her translation of the second book of Virgil), drilled them in spelling, and coached them in "declamation." All the boys were great high-school orators, and she copied out numerous selections for them to recite, with words helpfully underlined to indicate emphasis or gesture. These included such poems as "Friar Philip" and "The Lost Heir" (humorous), "The Rag Picker" (tragic), "The Wreck of the Hesperus" (dramatic), and "The Old Veteran" (patriotic, and very un-Quaker in its firebreathing sentiments):

*I'm not so weak but I can strike and I've a good  
old gun*

*To get the range of traitors' hearts, and pick them  
one by one.*

*No odds how hot the cannon smoke, or how the  
shells may fly,*

*I'll hold the Stars and Stripes aloft, and hold them  
till I die!*

Besides these concessions to popular taste there were more distinctive items such as the "Anecdotes of Eminent Persons"—the eminent persons chosen by Mrs. Pinkham being Greek philosophers of the Stoic or Skeptic schools, and the anecdotes all carrying some ironic twist or ingenious paradox, very suitable for discussion around the fireplace. There was also a series of clippings spiritedly defending Mr. Darwin's new and sensational theory of evolution. Part at least of the family solidarity of the Pinkhams, of which so much was to be heard, must be traced to their addiction to reading not shared by the neighbors. A favorable opinion of Darwin was certainly not held by the community at large, and not many families in Wyoma Village can have been greatly interested in Democritus, either.

Besides being a full-time housewife (a servant was out of the question) and an all-round mother, it speaks volumes for Mrs. Pinkham's energy that she had enough left over to be a good neighbor.

## LYDIA PINKHAM

Being a good neighbor involved, among other things, being constantly on call as an unpaid visiting nurse. No other kind in fact existed. The first training school for nurses was not established till on in the seventies, at which time, incidentally, the pioneer class in Boston shared a single clinical thermometer.

Mrs. Pinkham was kept particularly busy in this capacity. She was calm in emergencies, practical, extremely healthy herself, and, of course, much better educated than most women, so that her advice carried special weight. If Mrs. Pinkham, a former schoolteacher, stated that it was perfectly safe to take baths summer *and* winter, even a nervous family would be inclined to try it. She found it regrettably often necessary to stress this point, and not the least of her later contributions to public health, when her influence had grown to be enormous, was this same strong endorsement of the daily bath.

Finally, she had numerous useful home remedies for all the commoner ailments. Some of these were tried and trusted Estes recipes; some she had come across more recently in medical books, for the



Pinkhams' reading covered a wide and varied ground. This happened to coincide with a period when medical thought was in a highly unsettled interim state and the profession itself was rent with controversies, all loudly conducted in the full hearing of a critical laity.

Anaesthesia by ether and chloroform had been introduced in 1843, the year of her marriage, but for a long time remained under heavy suspicion. It was true that the angriest of the orthodox objections were directed against its use in childbirth, but how far it could be sanctioned in any instance was a matter of grave doubt. Though the Lord had caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam before removing his rib, it was pointed out that this applied specifically to only one operation, a thoracoplasty.

In the same year, 1843, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes had become convinced that puerperal or childbed fever was highly contagious, and that doctors were unwittingly carrying the disease from patient to patient. Doctors in the main greeted his theory as droll in the extreme; in the first place, it was by no means generally conceded that there *was* any such thing as contagion. But Holmes had more

to say. He not only recommended washing the hands in calcium chloride before and after attending each case of labor, but went so far as to urge that if a doctor came in contact with puerperal fever he should change his clothes before making the next call! It was felt at first that Dr. Holmes could hardly mean this to be taken seriously, but it appeared that he did. When this dawned upon his colleagues, the violence of their reaction was of absorbing interest to Mrs. Pinkham, along with many others; and it explained a good deal in her later advertising campaigns.

Leading the opposition was Dr. Charles D. Meigs, Professor of Midwifery at Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia. He was also the author of a widely used textbook on obstetrics as well as a fascinating work entitled *Woman: Her Diseases and Remedies*, and he enjoyed a large and lucrative practice. Dr. Meigs, with all the authority of his impressive reputation behind him, blandly placed Holmes's theory among "the jejune and fizzleless dreamings of sophomore writers." That there was a high mortality rate from childbed fever he did not

deny, but it had always existed and always would, being due simply to "accident or Providence."

Holmes, hectored or ridiculed on all sides, retorted with a heated counterattack, in which appeared such increasingly ominous phrases as "criminal negligence," "spreaders of pestilence," and "patients poisoned in their beds." It was some twelve years before his explanation was generally accepted, but in the meantime the public had been busy drawing conclusions of its own. Particularly the female public.

One section was composed of embattled midwives, who in any event considered the employment of male obstetricians a shame and a disgrace, an affront to the modesty of American womanhood. Most women in the 1840's, not to mention their husbands, were privately of the same opinion, but they had a more cogent reason: midwives as a matter of record did have a lower percentage of deaths from childbed fever. They might not have heard of such refinements as Dr. Holmes's calcium chloride, but between lying-in cases every self-respecting midwife washed her hands in soap and water, whether they needed it or not. Still, in the

later forties it began to be uneasily acknowledged that the typical midwife was perhaps rather too heavily loaded with superstitions to befit an enlightened modern age. A few women were urgently petitioning to be admitted to medical schools, and offhand it might have seemed that this offered the ideal solution; but the experience of Elizabeth Blackwell, who in 1849 became the first of her sex to achieve the M.D. degree, proved otherwise. And the following year, when Dr. Holmes prepared to admit a lone female student to the Medical School at Harvard, he was immediately overruled by the shocked undergraduate body.

"Resolved," they said as one, "that no woman of true delicacy would be willing, in the presence of men, to listen to the discussion of subjects that necessarily come under the consideration of students of medicine;

"Resolved that we are not opposed to allowing woman her rights, but we do protest against her appearing in places where her presence is calculated to destroy our respect for the modesty and delicacy of her sex."

Mrs. Pinkham indefatigably saved for her note-

book every clipping she could find supporting women's right to medical education; and she lived to see no less than three women doctors in Lynn, one of whom was her own family physician. But, in the meantime, she noticed that the sense of impropriety which overwhelmed the Harvard medical students at the thought of having a woman in the classroom persisted later in their relations with female patients.

"Only a woman can understand a woman's ills," her later advertisements laid down flatly; and as a reflective corollary: "It is a very sad fact that the more a woman trusts to the skill of her physician in treating her female complaints, the longer she is apt to suffer."

In this view, interestingly enough, Mrs. Pinkham was warmly supported by certain doctors.

"The relations of the sexes," explained Dr. Meigs (the same who had entered the lists against Holmes) in 1852, "are of so delicate a character that the duties of the medical practitioner are necessarily more difficult when he comes to take charge of any one of the host of female complaints. . . . So great indeed is the embarrassment that I am per-

suaded that much of the ill success of treatment may justly be traced thereto."

And this was not, it transpired, any matter for regret. On the contrary. "I am proud to say," continued Dr. Meigs, brightening, "that in this country generally, women prefer to suffer the extremity of danger and pain rather than waive those scruples of delicacy which prevent their maladies from being fully explored. I say it is an evidence of *a fine morality in our society*."

A colloquial verb widely used at the time was "to doctor." This did not mean, in the dictionary definition, "to practice the art of a doctor," but rather, in an inverted sense, "to submit to the ministrations of a doctor." It also carried a strong and resentful implication that these ministrations were inept at best. "I had doctored with the physicians of this town for three years and grew worse instead of better," a typical Pinkham testimonial would report; or, "Had doctored but obtained no relief"; or yet more darkly, "I doctored from the age of sixteen to twenty-six and had lost all hope." The word had a distinctly fatalistic ring. One did not say, for

example, "I doctored for years and was completely cured of what ailed me."

Considering the state of medical education, this attitude (shared by men as well as women) was not surprising. There were many private medical schools, specializing in quick turnover, where practically the only entrance qualification required was the ability to read and write. "By 1850," says Dr. R. H. Shryock in *The Development of Modern Medicine*, "it was easy for a man of no particular training to attend lectures for one winter and emerge a full-fledged doctor." But even if a student had gone through one of the half-dozen established and reputable schools, where the standard term was two five-month sessions, naturally he was not taught what had not yet been discovered. Little knowledge of antiseptics was possible before Lister, none at all of bacteriology before Pasteur. The existence of germs was not yet suspected. Similarly, his classes in anatomy and chemistry were bound to be sketchy if not misleading.

As for laboratory instruction, this was non-existent. The first pathological laboratory in America was not established till 1878, when the Bellevue

Hospital Medical College set aside for this purpose three rooms furnished with kitchen tables and also, as its founder liked to recall in after years, spent "fully twenty-five dollars" on equipment. Microscopes were such a recent innovation that one student, asked if the tissue he was examining were diseased, replied with simple truth that he could not say, as he had no idea what *healthy* tissue would look like.

Before the seventies, all that was considered necessary was for a professor to read to his class the names of recognized diseases (in Latin and English) followed by lists of their "symptoms" and "cures." The young gentlemen wrote these down in three parallel columns and dutifully memorized them. If a student were unusually enterprising, or morbidly curious, he might on his own initiative visit the nearest hospital to see a few of the diseases on his list in the flesh, but he was under absolutely no compulsion to do so. As late as 1889, Dr. William Osler was making himself thoroughly unpopular by going about trumpeting: "It makes one's blood boil to think that there are sent out yearly scores of men called doctors who have never at-



tended a case of labor, and who are utterly ignorant of the ordinary everyday diseases which they may be called upon to treat; men who have never seen the inside of a hospital ward. . . .”

And the situation then, though bad enough, was immeasurably better than that first observed by Mrs. Pinkham on her neighborly rounds. As a substitute for interneship, virtually all the doctors she encountered had learned their trade by apprenticing themselves to well-established practitioners, which ensured continuity of error if nothing else. They usually boarded in the older man's home, made up his pills, went with him on his calls, and handed basins. When surgery was needed, they rinsed his instruments (if the doctor were a fussy man) in water from the rain barrel, and helped to hold down the patient. More importantly, they copied his bedside manner till they felt sufficient assurance to set up in practice for themselves.

Doctors in the forties and fifties relied chiefly on bleeding, blistering, cupping and leeching. For internal medicine they leaned heaviest on vermifuges, nux vomica (strychnine), opium, quinine, antimony and calomel. Calomel in particular, a

mixture of metallic mercury and corrosive sublimate, was the favored cure-all, routinely prescribed for nearly every complaint and in alarming quantities. If a patient did not feel better after an ounce of calomel had passed through his system, he was urged to try another ounce without delay.

As one result, there were people in every community who had developed the unpleasant symptoms of mercury poisoning in the course of treatment. As another result, public sentiment became aggrieved to such a degree that the daily press, beginning with more or less restrained allusions to quacks, robbers and humbugs, worked up to a point where doctors were habitually referred to almost as though they belonged in the category of public enemies. The newspapers prided themselves on outspokenness, and were not inconvenienced by libel laws.

In the fifties and sixties, when various schools of medical reformers began to be heard from, they launched their concerted attack on the old *materia medica* with all the fanfare of a new political movement, complete with national conventions, lecture tours, open debates and official propaganda organs.

The public, on its part, took sides vehemently; in a democratic society it was felt that one man's opinion was as good as another's, in medicine or anything else. Besides, these movements had philosophic, sociological and even nationalistic overtones. Hitherto there had not been much original research to which Americans could point with pride, and they found it intolerable that medicine should remain in a humble state of colonial dependence. Dr. Holmes himself was not immune to this feeling; he complained that medical writers in the United States were simply "putting British portraits of disease in American frames."

Mrs. Pinkham, after scanning the field, gave her chief adherence to what proved to be the most durable of all the medical reform groups. These were the American Eclectics (as distinguished from the European). They are not a large body today, but they still maintain a national organization and an Eclectic Medical Journal, and doctors of the Eclectic persuasion are now accepted by the Army and Navy. In their palmy days, however, they established colleges in many cities, and were intensively studied both at home and abroad. They

were commended, albeit warily, by Sir James Simpson of Edinburgh, the first doctor to employ chloroform in childbirth. Simpson knew what it was to be embroiled in controversy with the more conservative branch of his profession, and may have had a fellow-feeling for other dissenters.

The Eclectics, as their name indicated, took ideas where they found them. Their basic authority was Dr. Jacob Bigelow, Professor of Materia Medica at Harvard Medical School and also, significantly, a well-known botanist whose specialty was the flora of New England. It was his work on *Self-Limited Diseases* that mainly impressed them. Dr. Bigelow had noticed a surprising thing: many diseases, in effect, cured themselves. Thus the common cold passed through various well-recognized stages, and then the sufferer got over it, no matter what remedy he tried or whether he took any remedy at all. The revolutionary thought occurred to Dr. Bigelow that possibly this could be extended to other diseases, and that the drugs to which cures were attributed might have had little if anything to do with the happy outcome. His general conclusion was that the natural tendency of every organism was towards

health and that a good many recoveries would be effected if Nature were left strictly alone, or given a minimum of judicious help.

To this the earliest Eclectics added merely that the most judicious help of all was Nature's own; in other words, botanic remedies. As Mrs. Pinkham came to say of her Compound, "It will at all times and under all circumstances act in harmony with the laws that govern the female system."

The greatest contribution of the Eclectics was their investigation of the therapeutic value of native plants. The fact that they were *native* plants was a good deal stressed; their vegetable and herb drugs were recommended as being not only efficacious, but as possessing the further virtue of being one hundred per cent American.

This fell agreeably on the public ear; it was something most people were familiar with. Lynn, a fairly representative community in this respect, could still remember the self-sufficient era when families not only made their own clothes, carpets, quilts, furniture, candles and soap, but also attended to their own first-aid and doctoring. A physician was not called in till all other means had

failed. Every good housewife kept on hand a store of "simples" (for external application) and "medicinals" prepared from roots, leaves and herbs. The recipes for some of these had been brought from England by the first Puritans, and dated back heaven knows how far. As time went on the settlers learned the uses of various local vegetable drugs from the Indians.

Mrs. Pinkham herself had grown up in a farmhouse where the attic was always pungent with dried thyme, mint, lavender and mandrake, gathered in spring and fall. Everyone knew that colds were best treated with boneset tea, mullein, tansy or bugleweed. Fevers called for vervain and monkshood. For aches and pains, witch-hazel, arnica or garget-berry were indicated; for indigestion, wintergreen or spearmint. Wild indigo relieved sore eyes. Infusion of foxglove was used for heart trouble centuries before the discovery that it contained digitalis.

Of the many books written by leaders of the Eclectic School, the one that struck Mrs. Pinkham as most eminently sensible was *The American Dispensatory*, by Dr. John King of Cincinnati. King is

remembered today chiefly as a pioneer pharmacologist, the first to isolate the active principles of numerous plants and introduce them into medical practice. The apparatus he evolved for this purpose, primitive but ingenious, may be seen in the Smithsonian Institution at Washington.

*The American Dispensatory*, a massive compendium of botanic lore, went through eighteen editions in his lifetime and had an enormous sale in Europe as well as the United States. It is considered the forerunner of the present U. S. Pharmacopoeia; the *Dictionary of American Biography* calls it "one of the most important American contributions to *materia medica*."

Mrs. Pinkham's copy of this work is still in the possession of the company she founded, which is no more than fitting. In it she discovered the formula which, very slightly adapted, became the basis of her famed Vegetable Compound.

But quite apart from that, the whole tenor of the book was in accord with her deepest convictions. It was, to begin with, dedicated "To All True Friends of Liberal and Progressive Medicine Throughout the World." Its preamble, too, stated a point of

view she found strongly sympathetic. "A large class of physicians in America," asserted Dr. King, "believe that the profession has been too much trammelled by the influence of Authority. . . . The assumption of infallibility in the existing and prevalent system of Therapeutics is too extravagant to bear the test of serious examination. No one point is more universally denied by the American people than the *EXCLUSIVE RIGHT* of one set of men to judge and have sole control in any thing. Persecution or proscription for opinion's sake is not tolerated in political or religious matters; and certainly should not be in those pertaining to *MEDICINE*."

The American branch of the Eclectic School, he went on, relied entirely on clinical experimentation, rather than slavishly following the ancient texts of "European or Old-School practice." And already it had been successful in the use of "agents and powers of a novel character, or the extensive application of articles previously little known and seldom used. . . . In general," he was free to acknowledge, "these have been located at the extreme verge of the visible horizon of the profession



—in the outside regions of empiricism, unknown to the mass of physicians, and but slightly known to any who were not especially addicted to botanical pursuits.” Many serviceable remedies, in consequence, had been regarded “with so much contempt that a physican felt almost ashamed to investigate their virtues, or acknowledge any acquaintance with them.”

In their reaction against this stiff-necked attitude, however, the Eclectics’ eagerness led them up some rather confusing garden paths. Dr. King felt that the time had come to “systematically methodize the hitherto crude material floating among New-School practitioners.” Hence his present book.

Part One described numerous medicinal plants “with sufficient accuracy to enable the medical botanist to select and determine them when met with.” It also listed “the properties of each and suggestions as to their use,” thoughtfully inserting at this point “a statement of such chemical relations and incompatibilities, medically considered, as will be necessary for practical purposes.” Part Two outlined the complete Eclectic Pharmacy, with instructions as to the drying and pulverizing of roots,

stems, herbs, flowers, leaves, bark and so on, and rules for preparing "decoctions, concentrations and infusions."

The section that caught Mrs. Pinkham's eye dealt with *Aletris farinosa* or, as it was popularly and more colorfully known, True Unicorn, a bitter-rooted herb which in the long history of vegetable drugs had been somewhat puzzlingly described as both a uterine tonic and a uterine sedative. It had been used since the earliest recorded days of Indian medicine, which gave rise later to a widespread belief that the Vegetable Compound was based on "an old squaw remedy." Perhaps indirectly it was, for Dr. King spent considerable time enthusiastically tracking down rumors of authentic Indian cures. At any rate he thought highly of *Aletris*, whether administered alone or in combination with extract of *Asclepias* (Pleurisy Root). The effects of this latter were so pronounced that Dr. King did not care to commit himself as to just how important a discovery he might have happened upon. "In uterine difficulties," he stated cautiously, "this plant deserves further investigation. It is, undoubtedly, one of our most useful agents."

If what he claimed for these two drugs was even partially true, anyone of Mrs. Pinkham's experience could see that they would fill an acute need. What with one thing and another, many "female ailments" were relatively much more common then than now; the one most emphasized in Mrs. Pinkham's advertising was about as incapacitating and quite as painful as a displaced sacroiliac. A milder but more or less chronic state of indisposition was looked upon as normal. As a further complication, pre-Lister gynecology was necessarily grim, calling for iron nerves on the part of physician and patient alike. From considerations quite apart from Victorian modesty, there were women who would, on the whole, rather die than undergo a course of it.

But they would assuredly try anything described with modest accuracy as a vegetable compound (not yet distinguished by capitals). So Mrs. Pinkham made up Dr. King's formula, passed it around, and waited for results.

She had been called on for advice in a great variety of illnesses, and for each she had something to offer. But the really heartfelt testimonials were reserved for this latest acquisition. Success Was

Immediate, as the slogan put it. The benefits reported were so gratifying that she began to jot down records of her cases, so that she could compare them later if need arose. Women talked about it at quiltings, after church and over the back fence. A stream of perfect strangers began to present themselves at Mrs. Pinkham's door; some had come from neighboring towns, some all the way from Boston. Their hostess was more than glad to give a bottle to anyone for the asking. If women brought children along, she would also dispense sticks of her horehound candy, which was exceptionally good. It was all a matter of simple hospitality, or at most, the equivalent of contributing to the Community Chest.

### III



#### ON THE MORN-

ing of December 2, 1859, the citizens of Lynn were awakened by the tolling of church bells. They tolled again at noon and again at sunset, that no one within hearing might forget the execution of John Brown. Many times in the following year the Pinkhams nearly despaired over Lincoln's conciliatory policies; visiting lecturers at the Lyceum could speak of little but the impending war. When Fort Sumter was fired on in April, 1861, the Lynn Light Infantry and Lynn City Guards, two full companies, were ready to set out at four days' notice, and impassioned rallies were held on the Common to speed them on their way.

Stirred by these and by his parents' fervent relief that at last the slavery issue was in the open (in a way this was the high point toward which they had been working all their lives), young

Charlie Pinkham, aged seventeen, signed up, too, and marched off with the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Company F. During his first term of service, he spent most of his time doing picket or guard duty at Fortress Monroe, but re-enlisting in 1864 in the same company and regiment, he saw considerable action following Lee's retreat after the Battle of Gettysburg. When he came back, unscathed and honorably discharged, he found that his mother's hair had turned gray.

Lynn jubilantly celebrated the war's end with bonfires, bells, and illuminations on High Rock. The town itself seemed well on its way to doubling in size. Land values were soaring, its shoe industry had reached a magnitude that was the wonder of all beholders, and opportunity was in the air.

In this expansive atmosphere Isaac, whose real estate office was humming with activity, decided to branch out boldly as a building contractor. Soon he was busy putting up rows of little houses that sold almost as fast as the paint on them was dry. It was a proud day when he completed Pinkham Hall, a business block with an auditorium on the second floor. Of course, if anyone looked closely, it could

be seen that he was still operating entirely on credit, but in the inflation of the late sixties nothing was easier to arrange.

Charles had come home with a few quiet post-war plans of his own, and he had the look of a young man most likely to succeed. Just at the moment, however, the Pinkhams were having as hard a time as ever to make ends meet. A steady wage (something new in the family's experience) would keep them going till Father made his fortune, which could hardly be long now. So Charles, who was nothing if not practical, went to work as a conductor on the Lynn and Boston Railway (horse cars), taking fares from Boston to Swampscott and companionably greeting most of the passengers by name.

Dan, the second son, graduated in 1866. Unfortunately there had not been enough spare cash to buy textbooks for him; he had been obliged to borrow the other pupils' at odd moments. This must have been a handicap to some degree, because to his chagrin he was awarded only the *silver* medal for scholarship, the only time a Pinkham sank so low. However, he was chosen to deliver the valedictory

address, and to no one's surprise his topic was "The Right of Suffrage."

Since the family's affairs seemed securely on the upgrade, he then set out, without a cent, to see a little of the wild West. Dan was always the most assured and resourceful of the brothers. He worked his way to Missouri and Kansas, where he attached himself to an expedition "going out" through the Indian Territory to Texas. The trip proved rather more than he bargained for and on the way he fell sick, but he recovered in Texas and stayed on for some time, supporting himself by teaching school.

On his return he was glad to find that the youngest boy, Will, graduating with the class of 1870, not only had the gold medal safe but was taking his turn as valedictorian. Will, even-tempered and friendly, was everybody's favorite. His "Oration on Progress" so perfectly summed up the family's confident optimism, and incidentally touched in passing on so many of the special enthusiasms of Mrs. Pinkham (now listening in the audience with decorously concealed pride), that she might almost have written the speech herself. Certainly she had collaborated on it.



"As education is being promoted," declared Will, his young face shining with earnestness, "so everything in the universe useful to mankind is progressing. . . . The improvement in traveling is not the least of the miracles which steam has wrought. By its potent agency one rushes from Boston to San Francisco almost with the speed of the wind. What remains to be accomplished by the power of electricity, an agency not yet understood, time only will determine.

"Ninety years ago a female teacher was unheard of. Now, we have women for postmasters, editors, school committees, medical doctors and doctors of divinity. The educated woman of our day would have been the wonder or the horror of early civilization. She has attained, and holds without remark, a degree of liberty and various efficiency, which would have violated the customs and shocked the prejudices of olden days. . . .

"Not many years since, millions of bondsmen toiled on the southern plains, with not a breath whispered of his wrongs. Now the tide of human emancipation rolls majestically round the world, and in these later days, seemingly, with almost

yearly augmentation. Five years ago only one state secured the ballot to the colored man. Now throughout the whole Union, his right to the franchise is not only secured, but he is eligible to office! Truly the tide of human progress is irresistible!

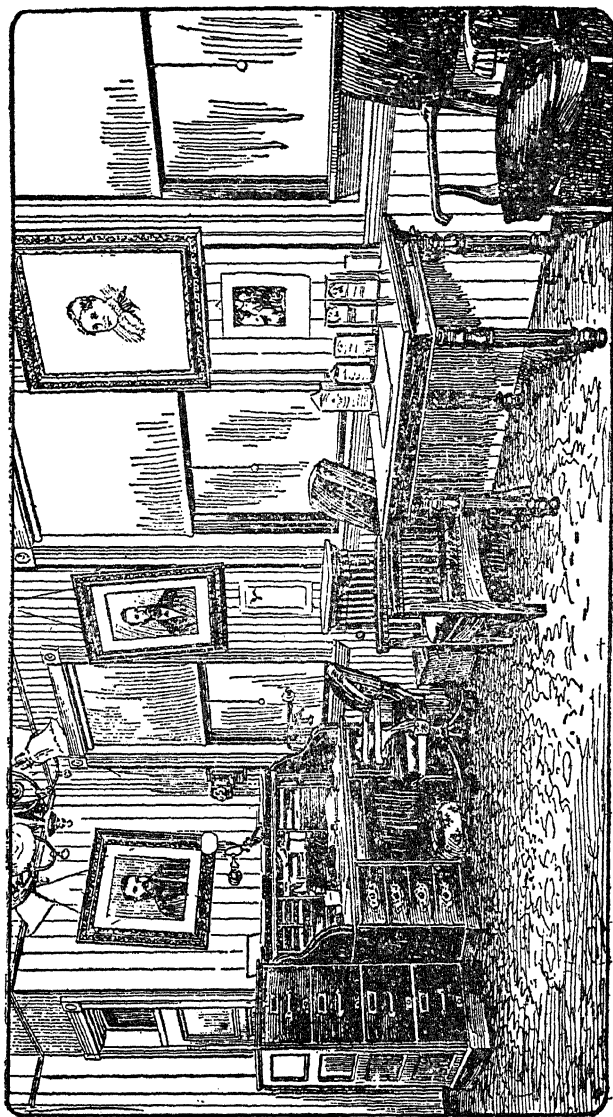
"And now, members of the Class of '70, as we this day go forth to take our places in the world. . . ."

Will's hope was to enter Harvard, but by unspoken agreement all individual plans of this kind were to be held in abeyance till Isaac made his final coup. Will accordingly began to teach, first in a Quaker academy in Weare, New Hampshire, then as principal of the grammar school in Bedford, Massachusetts. It would give him a chance, he said philosophically, to study on the side.

Dan, very mature for his years (twenty-two) had distinct political ambitions, but he too settled temporarily for something quite different—in his case, a neighborhood grocery. Politically, as it turned out, this was not altogether wasted time. His store became quite a center for intensive cracker-barrel analysis of the news of the day; it brought him

hosts of supporters and stood him in very good stead eventually. But the store itself soon failed, for it was strictly against his principles to stock liquor, and no grocer was expected to stay solvent if he sold nothing but groceries. The whole Pinkham-Estes connection was militantly temperance. Since the temperance movement had been so largely taken over by the churches, it was a trifle surprising to find them in this company, but their indignation rested more on economic than moralistic grounds. The whole trade was full of abuses and shaping up nicely for a fall. Workmen were paid partly in rum; also there were no annoying paternalistic restrictions on sales to minors.

As to moderate or social drinking, the Pinkhams expressed no opinion at all, possibly because this kind of drinking had so seldom chanced to come to their notice. The kind they did see was of a much more thoroughgoing description. The staple was New England rum, cheap, potent and consumed in staggering quantities; Salem, next door, had six distilleries. A man who did not drink, and heavily too, was looked on with some suspicion as a social aberrant. Incidentally, feminists like Mrs. Pinkham



The office of the president.

and her mother found it a matter of dispassionate curiosity that in what was still very much a man's world, men should so frequently find it necessary to render themselves insensible. If women by and large had taken to drink, they would not have approved, but they would have seen more point to it.

At any rate, the families of the town drunks could not pay their grocery bills. As a mournful if ungrammatical old song lamented:

*We were so happy till Father drank rum;  
Then all our sorrow and trouble begun.*

In hard cases Dan, a young man of quick and angry sympathies, sold on credit, which amounted to giving his goods away. But by the time he had to put up his shutters everybody knew Dan Pinkham. He took a stopgap job as a letter carrier and later as a post-office clerk; in both he continued to meet the public. Soon he was elected to the town council to represent Ward I, and the Greenbackers and Labor leaders were talking of getting him the state nomination in the next election.

Meanwhile, the turnover in real estate continued

to accelerate, and Isaac was not alone in concluding that it would be foolish to cash in before values reached their peak. By holding off a little longer, he felt almost certain of doubling his stake again. In 1872, in anticipation of just this, he moved his family to the biggest and best house in Wyoma. It had a fountain on the front lawn, and inside there was a new grand piano for Miss Aroline, who was to receive Advantages. But this prosperous façade had one unfortunate result: Isaac was asked to endorse promissory notes for more and more of his acquaintances, and since he was a most amiable man he generally obliged.

This was the situation, with the Pinkhams living in considerable though financially shaky state, when the panic of 1873 wiped out everything he owned and every prospect. It was an overnight panic, the most demoralizing kind of all, and it struck just one week after he and Lydia had celebrated their thirtieth wedding anniversary.

Banks closed, land values dropped, credits were frozen, no one was building or buying. "Great depression in business affairs," the *History of Lynn* noted somberly. "Many merchants fail, and real

estate almost unsaleable. . . . Unusual number of 'tramps,' that is, homeless wanderers from place to place, appear in Lynn, and receive temporary relief." Also the notes that Isaac had so freely endorsed were called and there was no money to meet them. The shock broke his health and finally dimmed his hopeful spirit. He was nearing sixty, too old to start over.

They were not a family to sit down meekly under adversity, but the first thing to do was retrench, so they gave up their fine establishment and moved to a small cottage on Western Avenue, in the Glenmere section. This was the oldest part of Lynn, settled early in the seventeenth century. The house was still standing where the wealthy families of Marblehead had hidden money and jewels in the cellar at the outbreak of the Revolution. Western Avenue itself had been the Old Turnpike; over it a hundred and twenty coachloads of Bostonians had rolled on a fine June day in 1813 to witness the sea fight off the North Shore between the *Chesapeake* and the *Shannon*. The Pinkhams' new home was not far from Floating Bridge Pond, reputed to be bottomless. The bridge

was constructed of logs and planking, like a raft; it could support carriages and horses with only a little water splashing over the sides, but a company of soldiers (or experimental small boys) marching in step would sink it out of sight.

Despite these picturesque and historic landmarks, on moving day Dan was not found with the rest in the wagon transporting the family goods. He preferred to cross the fields by himself after dark, having considerable on his mind.

Once settled in, the family sat down together to take counsel—all of them, even to Aroline, still in high school. It was the Pinkham habit to decide unanimously on a course of action. They had lived on Isaac's hopes as long as any of them could remember, and could hardly be expected to guess that his bankruptcy would propel them farther ahead in the world than he had pictured in his most sanguine mood.

Nevertheless, the moment would have held more pathos if it had not been so entirely obvious that the three Pinkham brothers were destined for success in almost any line they struck out on. The times were exactly right for them, or they were ex-



actly right for the times, and the only consideration that had held them back to date was now removed. They were young, shrewd, fluent, ambitious and bursting with ideas. What was more, they were bursting with *big* ideas. Their father had accustomed them to thinking in large and exciting terms, and even in their worst hour it never occurred to them to lower their sights. "There is no use in doing business unless we do a devil of a business," observed Dan succinctly, voicing the hearty sentiments of all.

The only puzzling aspect of the whole affair was why they should have resolved to stake their all on the one undertaking that, as far as any sensible person could see, held out positively the dimmest prospects. But after all, they had been brought up on daily tributes to their mother's *chef d'oeuvre*; their decision was really a very striking illustration of the power of spontaneous consumer demand. Here, right at hand, was something no one else had, a potential gold mine. This realization flashed upon them when, just at the psychological moment, there came an interruption of a familiar kind. Two strangers drove up from Salem in a "hand-

some carriage" to inquire about something called, they understood, a vegetable compound.

The only detail marking the transaction as in any way extraordinary was that these visitors were not only willing but anxious to pay. Circumstances being what they were, money could hardly be waved aside. To the accompaniment of considerable embarrassment, a price of five dollars for six bottles was set, and the compound had its first sale. The episode powerfully impressed one of the younger Pinkhams, who after some thought brought out musingly, "Why not sell it in the stores?"

If Mrs. Pinkham demurred, it was not because of any shrinking on her part from the thought of a woman's going into business. It was simply that the idea offended her sense of fitness. The compound was her own private and particular charity; hitherto she would no more have dreamed of asking money for it than of charging a caller for a cup of tea. But the family, warming to the idea, began to elaborate. It could be called Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound—not a particularly euphonious name, perhaps, but literal and descriptive. (For this very reason it later survived all successive Federal regu-

lations on labeling.) Then, they pointed out, would not its sphere of usefulness be tremendously expanded? Also, of course, they expected to make a pile of money. To conduct a humanitarian enterprise and get rich at the same time was irresistible enough; but there remained one final point in its favor and this tipped the scale. It could be conducted in the home and, better still, it was the kind of business in which they could all share. They liked that. So as a Family Venture it began and a Family Venture it remained, with all the advantages as well as the peculiar hazards this implied.

Once it was settled, everybody's spirits rose. Obstacles were summarily dealt with. To put the medicine on the market even locally would take a minimum of working capital, and they had, as usual, everything except that. But the boys were all working; between them (though wages had been cut since the depression) they could see to it that the family continued to eat, and there would be a little left over. Aroline too, graduating in 1875 with another gold medal, began to teach in one of the Lynn schools and contributed her share.

By unanimous consent Mrs. Pinkham was the

treasurer and general manager. Steak, it appears from one of her shopping lists, cost 20¢ a pound, boots \$1.75, and "gloves, ruches &c" (for appearances were firmly kept up) 40¢. Each and every week, after these items had been thriftily dispensed, the entire balance went to pay for their first advertising—small dodgers or handbills, rather inky and smudged, struck off by the local printer.

On their days off—life for all of them began after working hours—the boys slung knapsacks over their shoulders and trudged off to distribute the handbills laboriously from house to house, a process known as "putting them out" or "shoving them out." After Lynn and the neighboring towns had been duly alerted, they began taking the ten-cent workingmen's train to Boston, where they worked up speed till they could dispense two thousand apiece on a good day. But only a few scattered orders resulted.

Meanwhile Mrs. Pinkham, with Dr. King's *Dispensatory* at her elbow, wrote copy for the handbills, the labels and a four-page folder entitled *Guide for Women*. She had to improvise as she went along, but from the first her tone was assured;

she knew just how to catch and hold a woman's interest. And this was a matter to which advertisers hitherto had given scant thought, no doubt feeling that the purchasing power represented by butter-and-egg money was not enough to inspire any great effort.

Confidence in this line came naturally to Mrs. Pinkham who, though she might speak deprecatingly of herself as "an untitled woman who has no higher ambition than to do good for others," had for years possessed a unique formula, a complete medical theory to explain it, and an articulately grateful local following. If, as women affirmed, the Compound helped their aching backs ("that feeling of bearing down, causing pain, weight and back-ache, is always permanently cured by its use"), they were decidedly in a mood to echo her when she termed it *The Greatest Medical Discovery Since the Dawn of History*. The family, too, fully shared this estimate of its importance. Without such a faith to sustain them, of course, the project could never have survived the first few weeks, but sometimes the degree to which they imparted it to others astonished even them. "It beats all," Dan

marveled later, with the soles of his shoes drearily flapping, "how people say we will be rich."

Writing the advertisements, however, was merely a sideline, though a congenial one. Mrs. Pinkham's main occupation was manufacturing the product, and she embarked on this phase of the business innocent of the very slightest knowledge of pharmacy or laboratory methods. The first operations, in consequence, were a good deal more like cooking than chemistry. A cellar kitchen, immaculately scrubbed out and set in readiness, was reserved for this purpose. Penetrating aromatic scents floated up daily to the family kitchen and living rooms on the floor above. In the evenings the assembled family would bottle the day's supply while Isaac, a shawl over his knees, read aloud. (It was characteristic of the Pinkhams that they had been specially considerate of the quiet old gentleman since the crash; he was always made to feel useful, and no move was made without carefully asking his advice.) The bottles were then packed for shipment in second-hand boxes procured from a nearby grocer. At first it was largely a direct-mail-order business; that is, someone who came across their

circular would, as advised therein, write to "Mrs. Pinkham, Lynn, Mass."

The first sales worthy of being noted in a ledger were in April, 1875. Wholesale druggists occasionally ordered in dozen lots, but the leading dealer in Boston refused a two-dozen lot. Druggists in foreign parts—Hartford, Springfield, New Haven, Providence, Fall River—occasionally stocked it, but always on consignment, not being so rash as to buy an unknown product outright.

Nevertheless, on the memorable day when the mail brought a sixteen-dollar check, the brothers began to talk about giving up their several jobs and devoting full time to the Compound. Dan was the first to take the plunge. Since it was all a gamble anyway, he decided to investigate the distant but glittering possibilities offered by Brooklyn and New York. While he was away, Will could roll up his sleeves, keep the business going, and stave off creditors, with such help as Charlie could spare from the railroad.

The three complemented each other admirably. Dan was the aggressive one, Charlie was the level-headed one, Will had the charm. All the Pinkhams,

young and old, were very good-looking, but Will was the handsomest of the brothers; with his ardent dark eyes and fashionable side-whiskers, he resembled a young romantic lead on the stage. But he had no such aspirations, being entirely devoted to his family and entertaining what amounted to hero-worship for his two older brothers. "Wonderful smart men," he would say whenever they were mentioned, shaking his head in glowing admiration.

The family gave Dan their blessing and some 20,000 handbills. He arrived in New York by boat early in May, 1876, with his effects done up in a trunk and a barrel. On the face of it, surely, there can have been few more preposterous hopes than were held by this big, shabby, bearded young man, setting out to conquer the great city with a few sample bottles of his mother's homemade remedy for female complaints. Merely to mention what he was selling, he found, made people laugh. But in his letters home (usually addressed to "Brother Will" or "Fellow Doctors") he left in candid day-by-day detail an illuminating record of how one American business got under way. In a steadily ascending



curve the amateur Family Venture became professional; they all learned fast, but Dan learned first.

His initial step was to establish himself in a two-dollar-a-week room in a boardinghouse near the Brooklyn City Hall, make friends with the landlady (everybody took to Dan on sight), buy a street map, and have his trunk and barrel brought up (forty cents). Then he set out. Besides his handicap of total inexperience, he had picked a bad year; the depression showed no sign of ever lifting, and on all sides he heard in dejected unison, "Business is mighty dull all round."

There was clearly no time to be lost in making the city Compound-conscious, as he received an immediate impression that "to advertise N. Y., Brooklyn and Jersey City in decent shape it will take half a million" (pamphlets, not dollars).

He was perfectly willing, indeed eager, to tramp the streets in fair weather and foul, sewing his shoes at night to hold them together, if only the family back home could keep him supplied with enough pamphlets "so that I can surely keep at work." He had the New Englander's two-fold horror of wasting time or going into debt. "With

money so low," he wrote anxiously, "my expenses would soon run us all out if I didn't make all my time count."

As for expenses, he had hired a lodger's twelve-year-old son ("a good faithful boy") at 60 cents a day to help him distribute the handbills. The outlay gave him pause but he thought it justified: "I suppose I give the boy I hire too much for I have to pay his fare in the horse cars and on the Ferry-boat and shall have to give him his dinner when I distrib. in N.Y., but I can depend on him. His mother is a dressmaker and knows a good many sick women and has commenced to blow for the medicine. . . . If you can send me that keg full of medicine I think it would be well for me to put it out in trial bottles here in Brooklyn and let her give it to parties she knows; we can't lose much and I think it would be a grand good thing as it would get these Millinery Store-keepers and dressmakers to guzzling it."

Later on, depressed by finding that youthful hoodlums used to lie in wait for the unfortunate child, Dan decided that an adult helper was needed. "I hired a good man today to help me distribute, get agents, etc., one who knows a great

many druggists, porters of hotels, horse car conductors and others who can help about advertising. He went to work this morning and this afternoon went over to see a porter of French's Hotel to get him to fix things so we could adv. to advantage around there. I agreed to pay him \$10 per week and think it will amount to something as he is a good fellow and has a large acquaintance."

Between them they could, on an average day, put as many as 3500 pamphlets where it was hoped they would do the most good, but his recurrent fear was that the supply would run out. "When will you have the next 20,000 for Brooklyn as I want to shove them out before the other lot gets cold?" On the other hand, pamphlets cost money and were not to be wasted: "I've been a little cautious about giving them out to men and women on the street, but I think I should if we got them low enough to be kind of free with them." Also he carefully gauged districts to see which looked the most promising. "I put out some pamphlets on Water St., N. Y., today—the worst St. in America. It's pretty hard telling how to put out in New York where  $\frac{3}{4}$  are Dutch and there are all the way from 1 to 20 fami-

lies in a house. A Dutch druggist told me today this complaint was very prevalent among Dutch women. . . . Shall put some out this afternoon on the Bowery as I think that will pay us."

Printing was by far their largest item of expense; he kept a sharp lookout for any printer who could offer a cheaper pamphlet. "You see," he explained, "I hope we can get them so low that where we are in doubt whether there are two families or one living in a house, we can be lavish enough with them to leave two and run the risk." He thought at one time that he could get them for \$1.10 a thousand, or \$1.30 a thousand if they were folded. ("Pretty low. But I've got another party that is figuring.") The trouble was that he insisted on quality too: "Of course we want the benefit of the best press in existence." Finally he forced his price down to 85 cents a thousand. Below that he could not seem to go. Still, he calculated that at this rate they should really begin to pull ahead. "I tell you what, if the business has paid us with the prices that we have been giving for advertising and material, etc., if we do much business we can get rich in a short time on the difference in cost of same.

"I wish you would reckon up how much money we've spent and what we've got owing us and cost of stock on hand, etc., and let me know how it stands. My expenses with my help will amount to 9 or 10 dollars a week, but if you can only keep me going there's bound to be some trade pretty quick. P. S. I'm glad I've sharpened you up a little on printing now."

By this time he was talking of ordering pamphlets by the *million*. "Now you, Will and Charlie better race with me on getting the lowest bid for a million. We must throw ourselves this summer on pamphlets if we ever do. . . . You better rush another barrellful along. . . . *KEEP ME SUPPLIED WITH PAMPHLETS.*"

His most important objective was placing orders with druggists or, better still, inducing them to act as agents. He had to talk fast to argue them into taking either step; times were bad and no one wanted to take any chance on a new product, particularly one with a comic name and no visible backing. In the circumstances Dan put up quite a convincing show of assurance. "I tell every Druggist that I run across that they better lay in some

of this medicine, as druggists are selling cords of it in the New England States."

But there were pitfalls here too; he learned, the hard way, that it was not wise to put "For Sale by all Druggists" on his circular unless the Compound *was* for sale by all druggists. Yet it was expensive to have separate lots printed with each druggist's name. Every day, in fact, he was staggered afresh by the high cost of living, let alone doing business, in New York. (New York was "out here" or "out this way.") "My expenses are larger than I thought they would be. . . . Also I suppose I've got to buy some kind of a brush to brush my clothes with, as I get all covered with dust. I tell you it seems to be all put out on money."

Above all he fretted over his lack of experience; he had to discover all by himself the fundamentals that everyone else took for granted. ("I tell you we have got to use our brains in this business.") The more he asked "pointers" of other dealers, the more he could see that he still had to learn. "I tell you what, we can't give such high prices for everything. If we do, we shall always have to continue to go ragged." He was now pricing bottles by the

gross, alcohol by the gallon or barrel, and comparing notes with Will: "I think that beats you slightly?" As he noted with some gloom, "everything out here seems to be advertised to death." He aimed to distribute, singlehanded, enough Pinkham circulars "to make an impression"; but he realized that it would take a good many of them, pushed under doors, to compete with the glossy professional efforts he now observed.

When he did succeed in hypnotizing a reluctant druggist into stocking a small supply, it took strong will power not to haunt the shop to see how sales were going—or not going, as it too often turned out. "I shall write on the back of those cards you sent me, P. Jackson keeps a large supply of this Comp. constantly on hand," he would advise the family optimistically. (P. Jackson was also the distributor for Dr. Irish's Ottawa Beer—non-alcoholic—and Dan had great hopes of him.) It was profoundly disheartening to be greeted on his return with the callous verdict: "No calls for the Compound yet." Or to make a trip over to Jersey City, put out 5000 pamphlets, leave three bottles apiece at selected drugstores, and go back a week later to hear: "Not

one confounded bottle has been sold. . . . I wouldn't give a picayune for the whole State."

In these despondent moments Dan used to importune the family for news of how things were going at their end. "Keep us posted on whether you are getting any orders or money. . . . For pity's sake, hasn't Carter H & H ordered yet?. . . . I went into Jackson's this morning and found all he had sold was 13 bottles. You will have to send me some money right quick as I'm about out. . . . What is the village news? You see it's you folks that are hearing the news on medicine right along as no orders come to me to cheer me up after I've been tramping."

The reports from home were good one day, bad the next. "I see by your letter that you are receiving orders from all around, so I suppose you feel pretty well in regard to the Med. business," Dan might write. "I should think a few like those you told about might ease us up a little if we can now commence to get credit." But again: "I see by your letter that you are kind of blue. Glad to hear the medicine is curing them up so well, but don't see why in the 'Devil' it is, that you don't get any



orders. I guess we shall have to get a press yet and do our own work and buy only paper and ink. . . . Just be sure and get all the testimonials you can," he added encouragingly.

The family back in Lynn, on their part, were equally hungry for reassurance. "I think I write pretty confounded often," Dan replied hotly (and so he did, often twice a day). "I know it costs a pile for stamps, postal cards and paper. I guess I'll go to bed now, I'm pretty tired tonight. I'm at work early and late. . . . What really do you think," he queried on a rare note of doubt, "will the business pay or not? I sometimes feel as if I didn't know."



## IV



### WHEN IT RAINED

so hard that Dan dared not risk his handbills and was forced to "loaf for a spell," annoyance seemed to render his brain particularly active. Sometimes he emerged from seclusion with complete blueprints for advertising campaigns of a very novel description. He had a positive genius for turning liabilities into assets. Thus one rainy weekend he conceived the idea ("as we are not overstocked with money") of using little cards with a message written on them by hand. These would not only be cheaper than the very cheapest printed matter but would at the same time, he pointed out, convey the personal touch that was already the hallmark of Pinkham advertising.

"I believe a good way to advertise and a cheap way would be to get out small cards with this inscription on, and have them dropped around on

parks and other places of resort, say, late Saturday nights so people will pick them up Sundays: 'Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is a sure cure for all Uterine Difficulties and all other complaints incident to Females. For sale by —.' " They could have the cards made so small, he was certain, that "it wouldn't pay for rag and paper pickers to pick them up," whereas their pamphlets, unless carefully slipped under each householder's door, often disappeared via this route. "I think they would surely attract attention," he informed his brothers. "I never saw anything of the kind and if you fellows have a suggestion as good and cheap as this, just out with it."

The longer Dan contemplated his brainchild, the better he liked it. "Chelsea beach would be a grand place to do this if the tide didn't come up over the resort but there are plenty of places where it don't. Before Decoration Day just try it and drop a few cards all through the Cemeteries around there and I'll bet it will sell a few bottles. "Try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and I know it will cure you. It's the best thing for

Uterine complaints there is. You can get it at —. From your Cousin Mary.' ”

As he laid down his pen Dan was assailed by momentary doubt as to whether his mother would countenance the use of Cousin Mary's name when no Cousin Mary existed, and he added a hurried postscript to explain that in the advertising world, similar liberties with strict fact were taken every day in the week. “There are all such darned frauds as that,” he assured her defensively.

“Brother Will,” he began excitedly as another inspiration visited him, “I think there is one thing we are missing it on; and that is; not having something on the pamphlets in regard to Kidney Complaints as about half of the people out here are either troubled with Kidney complaints or else they think they are. I think you better put something about Kidney complaints of both sexes in very conspicuous type on the first page where it says ‘Guide for Women’ and have quite a sentence as it won't then seem so much out of place to hand one to every man and woman too.

“As a general thing now the men make no bones of reading it,” he had noticed (nothing escaped

Dan), "but if you happen to look at a woman while she is reading it she is likely to tear it up."

This suggestion, like the first, was followed up with great enthusiasm. As a matter of fact none of the first-generation or even second-generation Pinkhams had any clear distinction in mind between what their product could or could not be expected to do. Due to unforeseen complications in the family venture's history, clinical testing was belatedly undertaken only in the last decade, when to practically everyone's astonishment the old botanical standby turned out to possess singularly interesting properties. The founders, however, looked on it as more than slightly miraculous, and set no limits to its strange powers. If a user told them that it had helped a kidney condition (and users often told them queerer things than that), they listened with gratification but no surprise, and hastened to incorporate the glad news in their next copy.

"I think we should sell full as much more here by advertising it for Kidney Complaints," Dan continued alertly, "as men have more money to spare these times than women, and I find it's very prevalent. Isn't it possible to have it read on the

first page, Guide for both sexes to a knowledge and permanent cure of all diseases or weaknesses of the kidneys?" If he shoved out a hundred thousand such announcements in Brooklyn, it would, he thought, make "considerable of a splurge."

His program was exhausting, but there was something about the city that appealed to Dan from the start. He had not been there a fortnight before he was writing: "I think this part of the country the right place to live in and do business. New York and vicinity is *the* place to advertise. . . . I think you all would like living here in Brooklyn as there is always some place to go where you can get a little information." And somewhat later (since it was unthinkable that the whole family should not stay together):

"Brother Will:

I have looked at a house in Willoughby St. which would be large enough for us to live in, and which is in a good location and good aristocratic neighborhood just one-half mile from City Hall. It is a two story flat roof house, containing with basement 7 rooms and they ask \$35 per month

for it or would sell it for \$3200 which I think is mighty cheap. The horse cars run right by the door; the ceiling is high studded there being a 3 light chandelier hanging in the front room; there is what they call a heater in the basement. The basement would do nicely for putting up the medicine. Brooklyn water is accounted about as good water as there is so that would be well for our medicine . . . Give me all the news and tell me what you think of the description of the house? D.R.P."

This was almost the only point where Dan's judgment was completely off; the business stayed in Lynn, where it belonged. Nevertheless he persisted, taking an entire rainy afternoon to marshal his reasons. They would be right in the center of things, and living there might even be cheaper, "taking it all into consideration. You see if we were here the three of us with \$1.50 of help could put out 12,000 in a day." But his clinching argument was that "you can learn so much here in regard to the right manner of advertising and I actually think if the whole family should move here the learning and the sharpening of us all up during two years'



time would be worth thousands of dollars to us in this business which I think depends almost wholly on discernment, keenness and knowledge. Hang it! we've got to reduce this advertising down to a science and instead of so much brute force we've got to use our wits in getting up something original. . . . Hurry up and one of you come out here and we'll scheme something through that will lift us up *quickly*. When I again come to Lynn I want to dress as if I'd just bankrupted a *Rainbow*. . . . Throughout these storms I'm on nettles," he added restively, "as I want to accomplish considerable."

In spite of frequent setbacks, it began to be apparent that Dan was indeed accomplishing considerable. He exuded confidence. "Here I've been about three weeks now," he wrote. "We've started into New York on the slow way, but it may be the best way in the end." He could strike up a conversation with anyone, he talked easily with all kinds of people, and he picked up suggestions everywhere. "Just keep your eyes, ears and mouth open and rush things," was his motto. He made it a point to go in and pass the time of day with

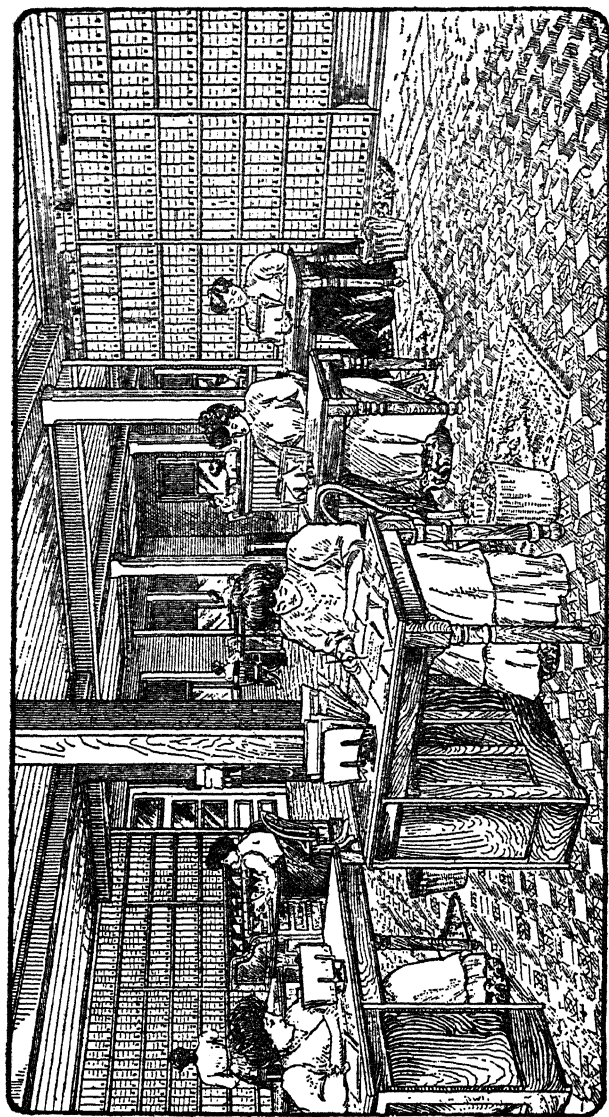
druggists whether they carried the Compound or not, and from time to time was rewarded by a cheerful item of news. Once, for instance, when he introduced himself and the proprietor shook his head, "the clerk spoke up and said he had a call for that medicine just the other day by a woman. You see," he admonished the family, "we've got to stir up things tremendously in order to make it general, but when it *does* become general our fortune is made."

What gave him that conviction would be hard to say (he had mentioned, "I've got just \$4.45 left") unless it were the next sentence: "I must now quit writing and get to work." He added the usual instructions to send more circulars; also a fresh supply of the Compound to P. Jackson, who was down to his last bottle. "I mean to keep you snapping," he warned, "so you must keep me snapping as my expenses are heavy, and send me more money as I don't want to run my check if my credit is good."

Money was becoming an acutely painful topic. "Don't you forget to send more cash," Dan kept reminding them, "as that's what a fellow has to use in this town. It costs money to get around here at

every turn." And the family did send him postal orders for two dollars or five dollars when they could, but ten dollars was the most he ever received in one lump sum and this soon vanished. His landlady "wanted some money bad," he owed for board, he had shirts at the laundry that he had not been able to retrieve, and "as to the luxury of getting shaved I don't think of such a thing as sparing 10¢ for that." To their query as to how one druggist was making out he replied shortly: "Don't know yet whether Grosvenor has sold any or not. I don't like to go near him as I look so bad."

Possibly the family would have spared a little more if they had not had it so firmly fixed in mind that Dan, who had nonchalantly set out on his own for a two-year tour of the country while still in his teens, could be safely trusted to get along anywhere. But Brooklyn was not Texas. Off and on Will and Charlie, likewise laden down with handbills, were plodding the streets of various New England cities, and no doubt their shoes were in little better shape than Dan's. The local Lynn trade was what they mainly lived on; in addition Charlie was still working on the railroad and Will was teaching in night



The private correspondence department.

school. They had their own troubles. But these were nothing compared to the straits in which Dan found himself one black Sunday. Ordinarily the strongest expletive indulged in by the Pinkham males was "Thunder!" but now he sent off an anguished, impassioned, and profane appeal.

"Brother Will: Just received your letter dated 20th, and found no money in it. Now *for God's sake* how do you expect me to live here in Brooklyn without sending me any more money. I've eaten my breakfast and it cost just 15¢. While I'm working hard it takes 20¢ to make me a good square meal. I've got now in my pocket just 25¢ left so today I shall eat 10¢ worth more and then have 15¢ left, not enough to work with tomorrow.

"The two last boxes that come I haven't paid for yet, the folks in the house paid for them and I owe them \$2.00 for that. The rule is to pay for my room in advance; I haven't paid for this week yet and Wednesday by good rights I shall owe them \$4.00 for that and the way you probably will do is to send me \$5.00 in about a week. There is no use in writing, I actually can't spare 3¢ to buy a stamp with and cramp my guts. I have got to get

a job at something else in order to keep my belly full. For God's sake whose management is it that keeps me from having what I actually need. You ought certainly to have sent me \$20.00 out of the \$24.00 you received from Jackson as I am prudent and won't spend it extravagantly.

"I see by the letter you are going to Bedford. I'd like it much better if you had sent me that money so that I could have had enough to enable me to work and eat tomorrow. It costs a little something to live here in Brooklyn. I should think you would know that my shoes are all out by this time. Now I will recite my expenses of yesterday to you.

Breakfast	20¢	
Fare for myself and boy to N. Y.		
and back to Brooklyn	8¢	
Hoboken, New York and back	12¢	
Dinner for both	40¢	
Supper for me	15¢	
Wages paid him	<u>60¢</u>	\$1.55

besides my lodging and now I'm to expect the box of pamphlets for which somebody has got to pay out \$1.00 before I get more money. Now I should

think you either were all crazy or else thought I was getting my meals at free lunch establishments.” (The withering sarcasm of this last remark could be appreciated only by an earnest temperance family like his own, for of course a free lunch counter meant a saloon.)

“You see,” he told them with an effort at patience, “the expenses that I have written down there are what I *must* have. There are other expenses that are about as necessary, such as laundry work, etc., but if it is necessary to wear a shirt two or three weeks at a time in consequence of the business not being good enough to have a clean one, I am willing to put up with that. But if it isn’t good enough to supply me with food then I want to get out of it.

“I see by the letter before me you took \$82.00 this week and sent me \$5.00. If these folks here hadn’t accomodated me I don’t know what in the *Devil* I should have done. Now in consequence of your *cussed* judgment I shall have to loaf tomorrow and live upon a cracker diet. By the time you receive this letter my appetite will be good enough to hanker after a good square meal. D.R.P.”

His next letter was composed in a somewhat less resentful mood, but not because his situation had noticeably improved.

"Brother Will: I borrowed another dollar of the folks in the house this morning and so by that means was enabled to work today, but my shoes are now all to pieces so that for the last hour it has bothered me to keep them on my feet and when you *do* send me money I've surely got to buy a pair. I'm going to try to sew them up somehow to wear them tomorrow.

"These people here in the house has made my credit good. But I can't go it on my cheek much longer so hurry up with some money and I'll make orders, and money will come in if there is any such a thing. The more money you send the more pamphlets I'll have put out.

"It beats all, that everybody should say we are going to make a fortune. They seem to believe it, too."

He was "not so hungry as I was when I wrote the last letter," he observed in a mollified postscript, but the memory still rankled. "I should have starved to death here if I hadn't found friends



and I don't see what you've been thinking about. My shoes I've been able to keep on my feet today, having done some sewing last night."

Dan explored an astounding number of leads in the space of six weeks. Indeed, he picked up so much assorted information that he began to feel it imperative to get home again to digest it at leisure and, more than that, talk it over with the family. He had often noticed that the Pinkhams had their best ideas when they were all together. Latterly, too, he had been considering that something might be accomplished by setting out from Lynn in a kind of gypsy caravan. "I think some two of us ought to get a horse and wagon and put into the wagon a lot of posters and pamphlets and take a trip up through the country, hitting some good sized cities and towns, and don't think it would cost much if we should camp out in our wagon. I'm beginning to look so confounded seedy that I feel as though I ought to be into the country putting up posters etc. . . . I find this business is tough on clothing as it's continual sweat and dust but I don't care if they'll only hold together."

The caravan never materialized, though the time

came when Pinkham posters were a distinctive feature of the rural landscape.

In the meantime, Dan was tentatively grappling with a really stupendous idea. It all grew out of his having noted with some wonder that boarding-houses in New York found it worth their while to advertise "home cooking" and especially "New England cooking." This was something he had taken for granted all his life; there must be more to it than he had supposed. "If we should hitch on to the medicine somehow 'The Great New England Remedy,' " he cogitated, "and then after a while have our Trade Mark Picture some New England scenery with a humble cottage these folks would consider it home-made and rush for it as they seem to be all tore out on home-made goods." And somewhere in the foreground, perhaps, they might have a "pretty little woman" artlessly posed, with the caption: "She is as healthy a woman as can be found, having taken 4 bottles of Mrs. Pinkham's Compound."

Their lack of an effective label had exercised him for some time; the one they were using looked undeniably amateurish. This, along with other mat-

ters, must be thoroughly discussed as soon as he got back home. By midsummer, in any case, he was reluctantly convinced that for the time being they could hardly afford to subsidize him any longer. in fact, it was a question whether they could raise the twelve dollars needed to cover his outstanding bills and return fare.

"Brother Will," he wrote frankly, "I suppose it pulls a little too hard on you to keep me out here so I'll come home and help you recuperate on finances and then come out here again when we get a little more easy.

"If you'll send me \$12 more it will enable me to square all up and come home.

"I've got a great deal to say to you and I'm in a mighty big hurry to say it. As soon as you have me receive the \$12 I'll start for home and then when I come out here again I can have enough money to advertise the city right up quick."

The twelve dollars arrived and made possible a highly fruitful reunion.

Mrs. Pinkham, now a well-preserved fifty-seven, was exceedingly occupied these days, what with making up daily batches of the Compound, doing

all the housework, nursing her semi-invalid husband, and conscientiously answering by hand a correspondence that in volume was already a portent of things to come. But busy as she was, she found time during the summer to organize an old-fashioned spelling bee such as she had shone at in her youth. It was held in Pinkham Hall (the name at least was still theirs), and in the course of the evening she efficiently spelled down all comers. The very last to stand facing her was a rising young lawyer named William H. Gove, who had at one time tutored her son Will for Harvard and who was, at the moment, paying marked attention to her daughter Aroline.

Yet with all this, Mrs. Pinkham never lost her air of capable and unflurried calm. Looking at her with reflective appreciation some days after his return, Dan was struck by the most scintillating notion of his entire career. It left the Humble New England Cottage and the Pretty Little Woman clear out of sight. What they wanted, it suddenly flashed upon him, was his own mother's picture. No one had ever used a photograph in advertising before, but this was, if anything, an added merit

in Pinkham eyes. He hurried to Charlie and Will. They agreed that the idea was a real stem-winder, but they felt a trifle dubious as to whether their mother would regard it in just that light. Still, they could ask.

"Do as you please, boys," Mrs. Pinkham replied equably, placid as ever but not ill-pleased.

A new photograph was the first thing indicated. The result was what they called a speaking likeness; moreover, whether by accident or design, it was absolutely inspired to the last detail—the neat black silk dress, the tortoise-shell comb, the white face fichu fastened with a cameo brooch. It was worth every penny of the forty million dollars subsequently spent on keeping her image before the public eye. Mrs. Pinkham's elderly features, handsome, sagacious and composed, were those of everybody's dream grandmother.

In 1876, the question of a trademark being settled to the satisfaction of all, she took the next step of registering her labels at the Patent Office in Washington. (So far the business had got along with no trademark, no officers, no stock, no by-laws; in fact it had no legal existence at all, and

only an informally agreed-upon name.) She did not, however, patent either her formula or process. Anyone, then or for that matter now, could feel at perfect liberty to make and sell a compound exactly like hers; only of course they would have to call it something quite different, and the chances are that it would hardly duplicate her success. As her sole protection against imitators she chose the copyright law, and in practice it sufficed. She may have owed her familiarity with copyright to the editors and writers she had known as a girl, or she may have taken legal counsel from young Mr. Gove. In either case she was well advised, for the registration of the company name could be renewed every twenty years. If she had patented the formula instead, her exclusive rights would have expired at the end of the first seventeen years, after which any concern in the United States could have appropriated it. This had already happened in the melancholy case of Pitcher's Castoria, one of the original American patent medicines.

Strictly speaking, Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound was a proprietary rather than a patent medicine. The original formula, if anyone had

L Y D I A P I N K H A M

cared to go out in the dark of the moon and gather his own supply of the needful herbs, called for:

- 8 oz. True Unicorn Root
- 8 oz. False Unicorn Root
- 6 oz. Life Root
- 6 oz. Black Cohosh
- 6 oz. Pleurisy Root
- 12 oz. Fenugreek Seed

There was never any secrecy about the ingredients, nor yet about the way they were prepared. In the early days the company went to considerable expense to describe each step in some detail, which was also a revolutionary departure. They simply thought that people would be interested, and they were right. Mrs. Pinkham bought her roots and herbs already dried and ground, so they could be weighed on kitchen balances or measured in a cup. Some were steeped, some soaked in cold water, some macerated in dilute alcohol. Then they were mixed all together and percolated through cloth, an operation rather like making fruit jellies. Before

bottling, more alcohol ("used solely as a solvent and preservative") was added.

The total alcohol content at first was 18 per cent, so that there was a distinct element of hilarity in the spectacle of W.C.T.U. leaders fervently endorsing it. Since the labels were explicit, the Pinkhams rather stiffly considered this a matter between abstainers and their consciences. Besides, alcohol or no alcohol, by their own testimony the Compound had done them a world of good. As for Mrs. Pinkham herself, no fanatic on the subject, she recommended various other alcoholic beverages from time to time, though naturally for medicinal use only. These included partridgeberry wine, fortified port, a teaspoonful of whiskey in two tablespoonfuls of milk (for distress at the stomach), and even, it is pleasing to note, "*good* sherry wine."

The surroundings in which the Compound was made up also came in for their share of attention. Pictures of Mrs. Pinkham in her scrubbed and shining cellar kitchen were heavily featured in the early days and there was something very confidence-inspiring about both. This was not only because homemade products had the *cachet* Dan



had noticed; partly it was due to the contrast afforded by the ordinary pharmacies of the day. For a graphic description of these, the invaluable Dr. King may be consulted.

Medicines, he reported, were generally made up at the counter, in the full glare of publicity and under the inquisitive scrutiny of friends of the clerk, traditionally a rather sporty type—"idlers or loungers who, from their continual staring at lady-customers, as well as their tobacco-spitting and smoking, are very offensive to the respectable portion of patrons." Dr. King could not too strongly deprecate this practice, which left the apothecary open to "innumerable queries of curious and suspicious persons" regarding the various prescriptions. "If the apothecary makes known the contents thereof he may offend the physician; if he hesitates or refuses, he may offend his customer."

There was usually quite a crush around the counter, but no matter how often the apothecary's scales fell to the floor, they were never tested for accuracy from the day they were unpacked. Mortars, glasses, spatulas and so on were generally cleaned at the end of the day, but it would have

been considered unduly finicky to wash them between prescriptions. Drugs not often called for were carried on the shelves so long that when they were finally taken down and the dust blown off, they had lost whatever strength they originally possessed. "The custom pursued by apothecaries of retaining on hand an old and inert stock of medicines is very reprehensible." But worse, much worse, was to follow.

"Some apothecaries I have seen," continued Dr. King in measured accents, "who lick the mouths of their bottles after having poured the required quantities of fluids from them, or who, in helping themselves to syrups or other preparations, apply the mouth of the bottle to *their own mouth*, instead of pouring it into some proper vessel from which they could drink it. These," said Dr. King severely, "are very disgusting habits, of which no properly-bred person would be guilty. A man of coarse mind, possessing none of the polish of refinement, is no more fit to dispense medicines than the most ignorant boor. Medicines," he wound up, "are in general sufficiently repulsive, without having *extra aversion* added to them."

More crucial, however, was the fact that the relations between apothecary and physician were currently on a strained footing. For that matter, it was often hard to tell where the apothecary's sphere ended and the doctor's began. Most doctors made up their own pills, plasters and powders, relying on the sale of these for a good part of their living. Thus the father of the "dean of American medicine," Dr. William Henry Welch of Johns Hopkins, was rightly considered to have been the best type of country physician in his day; and his biographers relate that the elder Welch liked to mix his own prescriptions in a bowl, sampling the result from time to time till it tasted about right. Another of his prescriptions, presumably held in reserve for more baffling cases, had in it, as the local druggist reported with some awe, "everything that he knew the name of."

On the other hand, apothecaries were apt to feel complacently that they knew just as much about treatment as any medical man (an impression shared by considerable sections of the public), and were in the habit of looking on a doctor's prescription as at most a general guide, to be altered

according to their own predilections or what they happened to have in stock. King felt that the time had come for doctors to take a firm stand against this highhanded practice. "It is not to be expected," he pointed out coldly, "that a mere apothecary should know the especial object which the physician has in view." Only one exception was allowed in which the apothecary might use his own judgment, but this turned out to be of an alarming character. Both in town and country, doctors frequently drank heavily to sustain them on their rounds; and when they came to write out a prescription, their minds might not be in that state of sureness so desirable when dealing with "ingredients of a deleterious or poisonous character." Or, of course, they might simply have grown rather rusty in their chemistry. If, in either case, the apothecary could see that what the doctor had ordered was clearly a lethal dose, then it was not only permissible but his humane duty to send it back—or, more tactfully, "present it in person"—in order that "the mistake or oversight may be corrected."

All in all, the public felt that there was much

to be said for Mrs. Pinkham's gleaming pots and pans, and for her homely, non-lethal herbs.

As orders consequently increased, the cellar kitchen was outgrown. Mrs. Pinkham investigated the two-and-a-half-story house next door and the owner agreed to remodel it, ripping out partitions, enlarging doorways, and installing a real steam boiler. They learned to speak of the new plant as the laboratory, but it no longer actually in the home it still adjoined it—a comfortably domestic arrangement.

From the beginning the enlarged premises were a source of intense fascination to the neighbors and townspeople, and soon the Pinkhams conceived the hospitable idea of asking all and sundry to visit the plant; it was something of a model for its time, anyway, and they were exceedingly proud of it. *PUBLIC INSPECTION INVITED FROM 8 A. M. TO 4 P. M., SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS EXCEPTED*, was the standing invitation on a series of postcards embellished with rocky shores or brilliant sunsets all of which bore the unexpected legend, *LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND*. And conducted

tours of the plant, where visitors were shown everything from the trays of crude herbs to the labeled package, proved so popular from the start that they were never discontinued, even in more sophisticated days.

Postcards and handbills were all very well, but shortly after Dan returned from Brooklyn, the Pinkhams discovered, more or less by accident, the incalculable potentialities of newspaper advertising.

Passing the office of the *Boston Herald* one day, and acting on impulse, Dan went in. As always, he had a generous supply of dodgers concealed about his person; he produced one now and asked how much it would cost to run it as a paid advertisement. "On the front page," he specified recklessly. He was told that it would cost sixty dollars. By coincidence he had just collected a payment for exactly that amount; it seemed a happy omen, so he placed the order.

The joyful sensation created by that first advertisement was not so much due to the claims made for the Compound (though they were what might be called inclusive) as to the electrifying effect of Mrs. Pinkham's picture. The eyes of every reader

immediately focused on her and stayed there. In those pre-rotogravure days, when even the most glittering celebrities were better known by reputation than by appearance, it was Mrs. Pinkham's enviable distinction that the nation knew not only who she was but exactly what she looked like. As a later pamphlet remarked, "That face so full of character and sympathy, soon after it was first published, began to attract marked attention wherever it was seen." It did for a fact. Within a surprisingly short period, out of the whole world of women, only Queen Victoria, with the Empress Eugénie a bad second, would have been as instantaneously recognized if set down on the street in a strange city. And of all this Mrs. Pinkham was serenely conscious. When a happily inebriated make-up man was so far carried away by enthusiasm as to set her picture at the top of *every* column, the expense was heavy but the effect unforgettable; she paid without a murmur. And since hers was the solitary feminine portrait to be found in many newspaper offices, she became philosophically injured to doubling for actresses, First Ladies, and American-born peeresses.

But this lay in the future. When Dan showed the first evening edition to his family, they greeted his news with mixed emotions. They had been counting rather heavily on that sixty dollars themselves. But within two days several Boston wholesalers ordered a gross apiece. Next week the advertisement went in again, also on the front page and with even more satisfactory results. One of their most nagging problems was conclusively solved. Of course they could not afford to give up the dodgers and the knapsacks just yet, but they knew that their real future lay in newspaper advertising. The only problem was to pay for it.

How they managed was typical. The house they were living in would bring, they discovered, around a thousand dollars; unhesitatingly they offered it as security to the *Herald* for a thousand dollars' worth of advertising. After the deal had gone through, it gave them many an anxious moment; when Dan went back to Brooklyn he kept asking worriedly at intervals, "Is there much danger of selling the house?" Often it looked that way, but by the time the bill came due, the business was equal to meeting it.



This hazard past, every scattered resource the Pinkhams could think of was turned into advertising by the same process. They had salvaged a few bits and pieces of property from the general wreckage of '73. All told they did not add up to much in the existing market—"these times are worse than terrible," Dan advised them moodily, "so I guess real estate won't rise very quick." But every last asset, such as it was, must be sternly sacrificed. "You had better work up everything in the shape of a mortgage into printing," Dan prodded them; or, "Haven't you got *any* other mortgage you can turn?"—"If we put many more mortgages into the business," he brooded at one point, "it does seem as if we ought to get easy on money matters bye and bye."

Fortified by his three months at home and armed with heavy new consignments of the *Guide for Women*, Dan had returned to Brooklyn in October and set out on his old rounds, prepared to stick to it "till we either get rich or bust. We've got to sail in now as there is no other way." What with mortgages and increased orders, their credit was stronger now, and the entire family was willing to plunge

into debt for materials and printing. "I'm bound to rush business when I do get to work you can just bet," Dan wrote. "Hurry up and send me 300,000 more. . . . Those printers will have to get up and get for I want *all the pamphlets that our credit will stand.*" It was really just like the old days with Isaac, except that now they were on firmer ground. Dan had been greatly set up by his discovery that the Compound was becoming better known with every day that passed. "You see they do hear of it after a while in some way or other!" He enclosed twenty dollars as an unexpected windfall, adding peremptorily, "For God's sake buy yourselves some clothes."

At this stage Dan was still trying and discarding numerous expedients, some of them desperate, some more or less hopeful. Once he unearthed a dealer who was promoting a cough medicine and was willing to distribute Pinkham handbills along with his own: "He calculates to have a team go through Albany, Troy and those cities in the northern part of the state ringing a bell and raising the 'Devil' generally with the name of his Balsam printed on the wagon and putting out

pamphlets under the doors of all the houses." Also he contrived to have the Compound featured in an almanac being prepared for the Christmas trade by a man who owned a store in "a grand good location. You better send him 10,000 as soon as possible for he is a *wide-awake* cuss."

But more and more he concentrated on the newspapers. New York rates were too high for them as yet, so his advice was: "Start out in the *Herald* as fierce as possible. I think it will help our credit 50 per cent." And he had heard rumors of another Boston paper that was folded entirely by machinery. "Perhaps you could make an arrangement with them to fold our pamphlets into them—especially," he added thoughtfully, "if you put an advertisement also in the paper." Further, he was pondering the uses of diversified media, and to this end had tried out a small advertisement in "a religious little paper that nobody but women would read." This, he considered, might well "give a kind of religious tone to our Compound and get the good will of a few Methodists for it." He entertained higher hopes, however, for the more worldly *Programme*, "a sheet that is got out every night for

4 or 5 Theatres in Brooklyn and which is read you see by all classes of people while waiting for the play to commence etc., including of course the actors themselves. A fellow that is in the Ale bottling business and who has had considerable experience told me that advertising in that had paid him the best. . . . I think that kind of a sheet and a good pious paper would hit them about right."

His main trouble was that no one he hired could keep up with the pace he set. In mid-October he wrote: "I think Charlie better start and come out here as soon as you receive this letter and then we can both distribute and look after our agents; nobody that we hire will take  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the interest that we do and I'm disgusted with having them around. Now I've hired a fellow but I find the cussed fool is too proud to work so I mean to make a different arrangement.

"If it pays other people to adv. with the frauds that they hire, it must pay us in the end if we only work ourselves. Tell Charlie to let the H.R.R. job go to the Devil and be out here by Saturday morning as I shall then expect him. I tell you what, it will need two or three of us to advertise around

here to make any show. My idea is for Charlie and I to keep distributing in N.Y. and surroundings all through the good Fall weather anyhow, and not hire anybody at all except perhaps a few boys after school. . . . If money is to be made out of the business it's got to be made by our working ourselves."

Charlie arrived on schedule and spent about a month with his brother. They took an attic room, economized by cooking their own meals on an oil stove, and thought nothing of tramping the length of Manhattan Island to save carfare. When he went back to Lynn, Dan's parting instructions were: "Go for Boston red hot by putting out thousands of pamphlets at the houses and on the streets for I want the Wholesalers here to hear big stories about the sales down East." As Christmas drew near, his letters were full of timely suggestions: "We must have Boston advertised in good shape before the holidays so that the druggists will then help us out a little on advg. . . . Why don't you have some envelopes with the following printed on them to be used with the trade: 'Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. The Sure Cure for All Female Complaints.' Of course you needn't use

them when writing to women," he added delicately.

No matter how hard the family struggled to keep up with his demands, they never quite managed it. Dan was keyed to a high pitch and was nervously aware that most of the responsibility rested on his shoulders alone. Once, when a shipment of the Compound was delayed, he wrote impatiently: "I'd buy some herbs and alcohol and make some Medicine myself and not wait for you to send any, if I had money enough. . . . I don't know of any news so I'll quit. Read this letter over carefully and answer about one-half of my questions will you?"

Dan still had his dark moments—"You are right about my wanting more money, but hate to call on you"—but these were less frequent. "I think we are now getting on the right track. We better keep pitching in on advertising as long as it's possible—and it *will* be possible," he decided shrewdly, "as long as people think we are going to get rich at it."

## V



### DAN WAS BACK IN

Lynn for Christmas, and shortly afterwards he brought a guest from New York, a remarkable character by the name of C. N. Crittenton. Mr. Crittenton's profession was that of wholesale druggist, but his avocation was the rescue of fallen women. He later spent a sizable fortune on his international string of Florence Crittenton Missions for unmarried mothers, a class for whom he felt a somewhat obsessive concern.

Crittenton had taken a fancy to young Dan, as most people did, though no two persons could have been more dissimilar in outlook. Crittenton was famed far and wide as the Merchant Evangelist, whereas Dan, he feared, was an out-and-out free-thinker. While in Brooklyn, curiosity had drawn Dan to hear some of the preachers celebrated for their eloquence—Henry Ward Beecher, Talmadge,

Bell—and particularly those whose sermons made a point of dealing with current events. “A fellow wouldn’t be ashamed to attend church here,” he conceded, “where there’s something else preached besides Come to Jesus gabble.” He was also struck by the overwhelming magnificence of Brother Talmadge’s church, lit by electricity and reverberating to the notes of a \$40,000 organ. In general, however, his candid opinion was that “the churches take up a little too much room.”

Deeply though Mr. Crittenton might deplore Dan’s mistaken views, the canny Merchant Evangelist could recognize an astute head for business when he saw one. A further bond was that he himself had launched his drugstore empire with a capital of sixty dollars, rising therefrom by leaps and bounds in a perfect Horatio Alger career. In the Compound he scented a potential winner. It was not pure benevolence that led him to place his first big orders for it, but benevolence probably did inspire him to pay cash instead of taking it on consignment. This tided the Pinkhams over several bad stretches, besides exercising a most salutary influence on other dealers. “Crittenton has got it,”



Dan was able to tell them impressively, "so *you* better hurry up and get it in."

Crittenton often visited the family in Lynn after that first time, partly because he could not help liking them but possibly also in the stubborn hope of converting them. They certainly offered a challenge to any conscientious evangelist. The younger Pinkhams had been brought up on a bracing mixture of Darwin, Modern Spiritualism and Higher Criticism. Charles and Will, however, had joined the Universalists, allied to but even more liberal than the scholarly Unitarians of Boston and thus, in Mr. Crittenton's distressed opinion, little better than so many infidels. The Pinkhams, as Dan had intimated, were strongly allergic to evangelical phraseology but they were also, though unorthodox, very well up on their Bible, and primed with queries of a most agitating nature.

Much of their ammunition came from Mrs. Pinkham's famous scrapbook, which was increasingly filled at this time with skeptical comments on the miracles by agnostics like Mark Twain and Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, as well as extracts from her favorite periodicals deploring the stultify-

ing effect of fear and superstition on the human mind. ("If the dreadful character of the Almighty which is taught in many churches were really believed, we should have a world of raving madmen." And underlined in red pencil: "In the intellectual air there is room for every wing; on the intellectual sea there is room for every sail.")

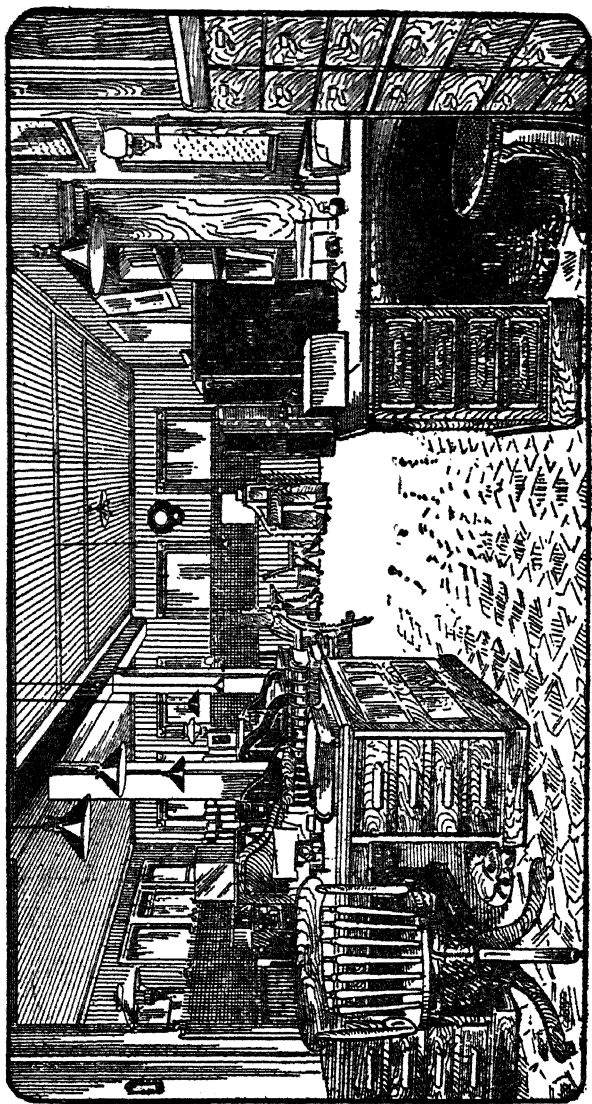
Mr. Crittenton, on his part, was one of the last to hold stoutly that the earth was flat, no matter what anybody said. The Pinkhams never succeeded in persuading him otherwise, but the arguments pro and con passed many a long winter evening.

In addition to all his other pursuits, Dan was now deep in politics. This, of course, had always been his ambition, and latterly he had enrolled as a follower of his mother's old friend Wendell Phillips (now espousing such revolutionary measures as the ten-hour day, accident insurance and abolition of child labor) and the stormy General Benjamin F. Butler, just defeated in his first campaign for the governorship of Massachusetts. Like them, he had also taken up the Greenback plan, a scheme of monetary reform that anticipated Gesell and Irving Fisher. Since the inflation of the

sixties and the crash of the seventies, the public had shown an unwonted curiosity about the mysteries of finance.

Dan had talked to many of the unemployed in New York; he had taken time off to hear a lecture by Carl Schurz, the German Socialist, and to visit the Peter Cooper headquarters (where he found "a pretty intelligent set of men"). All this helped back home. In 1878 he stood for the lower house of the State legislature, backed by the combined Greenback and Workingmen's Parties. An affable civic spirit was evidenced at the close of a rally addressed jointly by Dan and Will; there were three rousing cheers for "the Pinkham Boys of Lynn," followed, as an afterthought, by a cordial cheer for the Compound.

Mrs. Pinkham, too, had thrown herself into the campaign with loyal zeal, and her method of doing so was to insert quantities of Greenback material in her advertisements. For the first time in her life, perhaps, she now had sufficient scope, and so deeply satisfying did the experience prove that henceforth she made it a practice to share her views on many important topics with her vast public.



The business office.

## LYDIA PINKHAM

However unconventional this may have been, there was no denying that it riveted the reader's attention. Sometimes it was quite amazing to see how much she could get into one paragraph. Thus a brief résumé of the nature of bank credit, which though instructive must have been baffling in the extreme to the majority of her readers, was followed by the exhortation:

"REPUBLICANS! DEMOCRATS!  
WORKINGMEN!"

"Vote for those, and for those *only*, who by their voice and deeds will boldly and unflinchingly fight against such an accursed financial system. Thousands of people who are paying for this mismanagement," she went on, effecting a fairly dexterous transition, "are today suffering from KIDNEY COMPLAINTS, DYSPEPSIA, INDIGESTION, and could surely, speedily and permanently be cured by the use of LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND."

"PROGRESS OF THE PINKHAM PARTY," was another topical heading. "We have no politi-

cal purpose in this paragraph," it began disarmingly. "We have reference to the innumerable company of ladies who have found sudden relief from all their woes by the use of *MRS. LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S* great Remedy for diseases peculiar to females. Her *VEGETABLE COMPOUND* is of more consequence than all political panaceas. Ask your druggist for her *VEGETABLE COMPOUND*, and accept nothing else as a substitute."

(Why didn't the Greenbackers nominate *Lydia Pinkham* and be done with it? the *Taunton Gazette* was moved to inquire in a rather nettled tone.)

In 1878, whether helped or hindered by these maternal efforts in his behalf, Dan was elected, and he made quite a stir from the start. He described himself as "a radical democrat with a small d." Shortly after the session opened, he rose to suggest that, as an initial move towards balancing the budget, it might be a good idea for legislators to reduce their own salaries. Back where *he* came from, a Lynn shoemaker was paid twelve cents a pair, and "upon complaining to his employer that he cannot live on that, he is informed that he

must cut down his expenses. The people, Sir, have come down to hard pan, and I think it but just that the legislature and salaried officials should do the same." If necessary, Dan added callously, they could always live on fish cakes, which were both nourishing and cheap. After this he was inevitably tagged as the Fish-Cake Representative, and his speeches were always well reported. Mrs. Pinkham's scrapbook was full of them.

By the end of his first term, he had built up a considerable following. His supporters were of the opinion that he had in him the makings of a controversial political figure of possibly national stature, and they may have been right. His voting record was consistently liberal and he never missed a chance to make himself heard. He spoke against the Ku Klux Klan—"cowardly and despicable"; he spoke on taxes; when a bill was introduced to disfranchise those on public relief, he waxed vehement: "Mr. Speaker, I warn the Republican party of this state (whose early career no one glories in more than I, because in its early purity, it was the champion of the freedom and enfranchisement of the black man of the South), I warn that party to

beware of the vengeance of heaven, now that it is seeking to disfranchise the white man of the North!"

Naturally, his party was dumbfounded to see him deliberately, as it seemed, throw away his second term. When the Republicans brought forward a mild temperance measure (it called for no more than the licensing of liquor dealers), Dan forgot party lines and voted for it. The bill passed, but it wrecked his own chances for re-election, and in a neck-to-neck race he was defeated by a young newcomer to politics, Henry Cabot Lodge of Nahant.

His home town, at any rate, thought just as highly of him as before, if not more so. The *Lynn Transcript* (Republican) felt constrained to editorialize upon his defeat "not upon any personal ground whatsoever, but as showing the dominating power of Rum in our politics. Before election day Mr. Pinkham was urged to abandon his temperance principles. . . . This he positively refused to do even if a defeat at the polls were the penalty. The firm stand he thus took does him more honor in the eyes of thinking people than a perpetual lien upon the State House secured at the expense of



his independence." The writer ended on a rather sinister note by stating that the election had, to the best of his knowledge and belief, been swung at a secret conference attended by "upwards of *one hundred* Lynn rumsellers."

At one stage in the campaign the opposition had circulated leaflets inquiring acidly: "How does Dan Pinkham expect his mother to keep her roots and herbs without alcohol? That was a mean piece, Dan, voting prohibition! You were not elected for that, and next year you will be *elected* to advertise cures for female complaints."

This was, in point of fact, just what Dan did; he had more than one string to his bow. However, "Although we're out of politics now," he wrote Will from Brooklyn, "if there is any political news or gossip you better keep me posted. Be sure and keep me off any municipal ticket in any capacity whatever. But I don't suppose there is any need of saying this for perhaps I couldn't get on if we all tried to have me."

He thought, too, that they might turn his late political misadventure to useful account. (Luckily he had dropped the idea of moving the business to

New York. "I feel that the most of our work has got to be done where we make our medicine.") Besides the Compound, they were now manufacturing other products, notably liver pills, and Dan's advice was to seize the moment to advertise them "tremendously" first in Lynn ("I think this election business will make it easier for us to boom them there than anywhere else") and then throughout New England. "We've got to make up \$10,000 worth of pills, and shove them into advertising right in Maine. . . . By the *Eternal*, I'd have a pill and comp. sale in Mass. anyhow that would astonish the natives. I'd advertise it so thoroughly that it could never die out."

"Brother Will," he signified approvingly when this campaign had been under way for some weeks, "I'm glad to see that you are duffing in so heavy down in Maine. I'd run that state to its full capacity so that anybody that sees a paper in the whole state will surely see our ad." And from the scale on which his plans were now cast, it could be seen with what matter-of-factness he took their ultimate success for granted. "I will think we are just beginning to get our eye-teeth cut when we duff into

adv. at the rate of \$200,000 a year," he remarked coolly, naming a sum that was roughly a hundred times their current gross. What was more extraordinary was that at the same time he should consider himself a model of cautiousness and restraint. "I saw some New Orleans papers the other day but I don't believe in spreading out too thinly," he reported, with the air of one putting temptation sternly behind him. "We had better not go over more ground than we can thoroughly."

Nor did he scorn much lowlier devices; in fact, no chance was too slight to be ignored. "I think it would be well enough to get women agents to sell it or peddle it in 50¢ trial bottles outside the localities where we advertise largely. Now, Baltimore would be a good place to get a woman agent. . . ." There were a bewildering number of such possibilities and no one to tell him which was the best, but he fervently hoped that time would show. "If we keep doing enough to obtain some experience," he brooded, "we shall get it, before we get to be as old as Methuselah."

Meanwhile, if one of his brothers came to New York again, he thought it would be a good idea for

both of them to "spruce up a little." Spruced up, they could "go around among these advg. agents, look out sharp and see what we can learn." (One useful thing to remember was that "Advg. agents are hungry for business, the whole of them.") Of course, he explained, if they wanted to take the easy way, they could simply pattern their advertising after some established competitor's, but this would never get them very far. His mother's publicity was too highly individual. Besides, no one else was advertising a comparable product with anything like the prodigality he envisaged; here the Pinkhams led the field.

Before the end of 1879, an ominous note began to appear in Dan's letters; he had caught a chill and could not seem to shake it off. "My cough has been pretty bad so I bought some cough medicine last night." Mrs. Pinkham answered by return mail, advising him to steep "one-half ounce of Pleurisy root & one-half ounce of Marsh-mallows, take one-half cup at a time three or four times per day." And when she heard that his cough did not respond to this treatment she became thoroughly alarmed. "If you have pain in your lungs," she

wrote anxiously, "you want to come home immediately. Don't go to staying out there and running any risk."

But Dan was exhausted and run down, a perfect subject for tuberculosis or, as they called it, consumption. "He came home very sick," Mrs. Pinkham's entry goes on, "threatened with Pneumonia. Advised to steep one-half ounce of Pleurisy root to one ounce of Bugle weed, take one-half cup full for common drink when he feels like it. As soon as possible got him into a sweat with hot bricks wrapped in cotton cloth and saturated with alcohol and then flannel wrapped around them. In two days he was decidedly better." Mrs. Pinkham, relieved, felt that if he gargled with Rosemary and Golden Seal, and took "when on feet again" one or two bottles of her Blood Invigorator, all would be well.

Even with devoted home nursing, however, Dan's cough got no better; there was something very pathetic in the realization that her most trusted remedies failed her when she needed them most.

Yet it was on an optimistic note that Dan left for Georgia to spend the winter. If he was not bet-

ter by spring he intended to go on to Texas, where he had recovered from an earlier illness. Dan had always been so resilient and brimful of vitality that when the family saw him off, he and they both felt that "after a spell in a milder clime he would come back as good as new."

For the first time they had to keep the business going without him, and it had grown to a point where this took all their waking hours.

Making up the Compound was the least of it. A voluminous correspondence had to be dealt with, and this task fell to Mrs. Pinkham alone. It had all come about quite gradually. In the beginning each individual order had been so thankfully received that she had often slipped in a little personal note with the shipment. (All her letters began "Dear Friend," and ended, "Yours for Health.") This led to further exchanges, and she considered it the most natural thing in the world to answer queries on all manner of health problems, just as she had with neighbors in the past. To make it the more familiar, it even included a little charity work, for, though every dollar counted, her soft heart often led her to give the medicine away free.

(These lapses from strict commercial procedure were conscientiously entered in her notebook. "She will pay when she gets able to earn. I think she is a teacher." Or: "Gave Sue Burns 2 Box. Compound Pills. A poor fatherless girl." Or: "I send to a poor woman at Lone Rock, Wis., 2 Boxes Comp. Pills. If I hear favorably from it shall send more.")

Mrs. Pinkham naturally found it pleasurable to see the sales curve rise, this being impersonal. But to the end of her days she never got over feeling a distinct awkwardness about taking money from people she *knew*; and many people insisted on making the trip to Lynn to consult her in person. ("Woman very weak and pale, been running down one year.") Some, it is to be feared, were a little ready to impose on her: "Mrs. Jackson got a bottle. She was visiting at Jimmie's aunt's. Did not pay."

The next step might have been foreseen in the nature of things. "Write to Mrs. Pinkham at Lynn, Mass., and she will advise you," every advertisement cordially urged. Mrs. Pinkham, already on the verge of writer's cramp, gave up in the face of

the resultant avalanche. To cope with it she began to employ "lady typewriters" (still a daring innovation in the business world) to answer letters to her dictation. They were a contingent of serious young women in Gibson blouses, sweeping skirts and pompadours, very conscious of their solemn responsibility. And well they might have been, for the Department of Advice of the Lydia E. Pinkham Company became a potent factor in altering both the hygienic habits and social mores of the nation at large.

Along with her Compound, Mrs. Pinkham had always dispensed much sound information on general hygiene, and this filled a felt need. Public health was at a low level. Scrofula and dropsy were hideously commonplace; epidemics of cholera, scarlet fever and typhus took a frightening yearly toll; infants succumbed in equal numbers to croup, diphtheria, or the laudanum and paregoric with which they were dosed when they cried. "An early deathbed is an early crown," the neighbors used to say condolingly. As nearly every family had at least one consumptive member, standard cookbooks



included recipes for Pulmonary Balsams and the like.

People were not, in the main, very clean; they found it necessary to scratch themselves a good deal, and they spat freely in public and private. In the next quarter-century pruritis diminished in exact ratio to bathtub sales, while chlorosis or "green sickness" in young girls, once a staple part of every doctor's practice, disappeared utterly and dramatically from view with changes in social attitudes, diet, dress, exercise, and a generally less portentous approach to adolescence. Many a doctor today would be hard put to it to identify even the name.

In the pages of old magazines and newspapers, half filled with patent medicine advertisements, it is a melancholy picture that unfolds. The women had Falling Wombs, the men had Failing Powers; their children were afflicted with Worms.

Mrs. Pinkham's basic rules for health represented for whole sections of the public positively their first introduction to the principles of hygiene. Above all she campaigned for elementary cleanliness—"Keep clean inside and out!"—and attacked

the widespread prejudice against fresh air, particularly night air: "Ventilate! Ventilate! Ventilate! Sleep with open windows!" (She did not go so far as to recommend a room of one's own, but she did say that it would add years to most women's lives if they could get away from their families just for one blessed hour of privacy out of the twenty-four.)

Diet reform was another of her concerns. In view of the kind and quantity of food generally consumed, it was small wonder that anti-bilious pills were in dire demand. Entire communities were accustomed to subsist through the winter months on a diet of beans, salt pork and doughnuts. The Grahamites declared grimly that vast numbers of their fellow-Americans were in a chronically toxic condition as the result of sheer gluttony, recording their further conviction that a hundred thousand fatalities each year might be attributed to this cause alone. Mrs. Pinkham could not see quite eye to eye with them in their vegetarian crusade, but she joined them in urging the use of whole grain cereals, bran and plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. A typical letter included the injunc-

tion: "Eat no pastry nor fine flour, but instead graham bread, the various mushes and fruit. Ride out, walk out, dig, use the trowel. Study the hygienic laws that your own nature requires."

As both sexes suffered lamentably from dyspepsia—"the symptoms," mused Mrs. Pinkham, "include great distress at pit of stomach, heaviness or burning sensation, causing the patient to feel melancholy and at times morose. A general sense of discomfort seems to pervade the entire system"—she was frequently implored to name a remedy. One of her favorites was:

- 1 lb. Wild Poplar Bark
- 4 ozs. Golden Seal
- 4 ozs. Gentian Root
- 3 ozs. Cinchona (Peruvian Bark)
- 2 ozs. Cardamon Seeds (a stomachic)
- 4 ozs. Camomile Flowers
- ½ oz. Best Refined Cayenne Pepper,

the whole percolated in 1 gal. of best spirits with water and sugar added. "The above if persisted in will perform a cure in the most obstinate cases if

taken in proper doses and," she added firmly, "if pork of all kinds and salt fish avoided, also any food that tends to create wind." Following the same line of thought she listed, under the heading "Antidote to poison," an emergency treatment which was equally efficacious if an unfortunate patient had "fallen into convulsions *from having overloaded the stomach.*"

Since her correspondents ran the gamut of physical ailments, her notebooks held many little items that recall the omniscient almanac.

"White pine bark is good for sluggish kidneys."

"If taken with great distress in the back, apply a bag of salt heated hot."

Here was a sure cure for hiccoughs: "A hop bag upon pit of stomach."

And there might, who knows, be a fortune in this hint: "Bathe the head twice a day in a teaspoonful of epsom salts to a pint of wormwood. It will prevent hair from falling off and will cause a good growth of hair."

She read medical literature assiduously, and was fascinated by reports of anything new or unconventional in the way of treatment. Magnetic heal-

ing made an instant appeal to her, just as it did to Harriet Martineau and Mrs. Browning. "If there is within your reach a kind, intelligent magnetic healer, let your wife take a course of treatment," she advised one worried husband. She often recommended physiotherapy of one kind or another—vapor baths and diathermy—and she thought that for asthma, "an occasional slight charge of electricity might benefit. If you are so situated as to take electricity from a good electrician, try it with care." She had some conception of allergies, instructing one client to omit salt from her diet forthwith: "It acts upon your system as an irritant poison." And she had a strong inkling of what lay behind psychosomatic medicine: "The symptoms supposed to be indications of malarial trouble are probably the result of nervous prostration."

But though new theories found her invariably receptive, nothing really pleased or interested her quite as much as the rumor that a fresh use had been found for some quite common, ordinary household article. "I have this from good authority," she once wrote hopefully, "that the worst case of smallpox can be effectually cured in three days

simply by cream of tartar. It is known to have cured in thousands of cases without a failure." In the same spirit but on a better documented basis, she recommended applications of strong tea (tannic acid) for burns.

Mrs. Pinkham's main preoccupation was always, of course, female health. What with the amount of back-breaking work in every home at a time when labor-saving devices were not, primitive obstetrics which often left irreparable injuries, and the cumbrousness of clothing and rigidity of whale-bone corsets which decency demanded—"our habits of life and dress tell sadly upon women"—a good many were truly suffering the tortures of the damned. But what roused her to steady protest was the almost universal belief, shared by laymen and medical men alike, that this was simply woman's natural lot.

That innocent-sounding adjective *natural*, she noticed, could be put to suspiciously ambiguous use. It might mean a state of affairs that could never be altered and must therefore be endured, however sad the spectacle. But equally often it was heard in a blithely minimizing sense, implying that

anything so perfectly natural could not be very serious. As the first Mrs. Dombey was reproachfully told, all she needed to do was put forth a little effort.

Susan B. Anthony was much struck on one occasion when she overheard the word employed in the latter sense. A cousin of hers died some weeks after bearing her fourth child, but during this interval she was approached one day for sympathy by her husband, who had a headache. Miss Anthony's cousin said weakly that so had she. This tactless remark, so unfeeling as well as uncalled-for, could hardly be passed over in silence. "Yes," the husband made carefully clear, "but I mean I have a *real* headache. Yours is just a natural consequence."

Mrs. Pinkham disposed of both attitudes crisply and summarily, and she started with the young. "Tradition says, 'Women must suffer,' and young girls are taught so. There is a little truth and a great deal of exaggeration in this. The mother suffered and she thinks her daughter must suffer also. It is true only to a limited extent. No excessive pain is healthy. If a young woman suffers severely she

needs treatment, and her mother should see that she gets it."

Nor had she the slightest use for the cult of fragility—which in any case, she was in a position to know, had far fewer adherents than might be supposed from contemplation of the wasp-waisted belles in *Godey's Magazine*. True, a fashionable clergyman might, as in the widely quoted funeral sermon for one Susanna Pierce, list among the winsome attributes of the deceased a "constitutional delicacy of organization" which had imparted to her features "that peculiar charm which no healthful comeliness can ever confer." But Mrs. Pinkham was well aware that to the great mass of ordinary women with families to feed and floors to scrub, not to mention underpaid factory girls and hard-driven farm wives, such charm appeared peculiar indeed. All they asked was health, the ruder the better. As for the theory that feminine appeal was synonymous with helplessness, Mrs. Pinkham contented herself with observing briefly: "Weakness Is Never the Source of Power."

Rightly gauging that those who appealed to her for help had quite enough to depress them as it



was ("How many women do you know who can say they are thoroughly well?"), she cast about for anything calculated to soothe or cheer. "Many women fade early," she would suggest, "simply because they do not take proper care of themselves, whirled along in the excitements of fashionable life. . . ." Certainly she was under no delusion that the fatigue of most of her clientèle could be traced to a giddy social whirl, but she concluded, probably with justice, that it might set them up in spirits to be reminded that "society women are just as susceptible to the ills of womankind as are their less favored sisters."

"LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND is a Positive Cure for all those Painful Complaints and Weaknesses so common to our best female population," was a sentence that turned up in most of her advertisements. (The *best* was a reassuring touch, since one eyebrow-raising list covered everything from general debility to nymphomania.) "It revives the drooping spirits, gives elasticity and firmness to the step, restores the natural lustre to the eye, and plants on the pale cheek of the woman the fresh roses of life's spring

and early summer time. *REJOICE THAT A PAINLESS REMEDY IS FOUND.*"

At this period the relations between the Compound's discoverer and the medical profession might be described as wary, but not always or openly antagonistic. Mrs. Pinkham often stressed that "Physicians Use It and Prescribe It Freely," evidently intending this to be construed in its favor. And it was a fact, particularly in the case of older doctors who had been using botanicals all their professional lives. Druggists till around the turn of the century often ordered a supply of the Compound in gallon lots, so that it could be dispensed on prescription, an indication that this was fairly routine procedure.

Yet the element of rivalry was always implicit. Mrs. Pinkham looked tolerantly upon doctors when they were prescribing her Compound but not, on the whole, otherwise. They were credited with good intentions, and that was about all. She deeply distrusted surgery. "*MRS. PINKHAM SAVED ME FROM AN OPERATION,*" recurred often and pointedly in the testimonials she chose for

publication. "Dr. tells me I can have the trouble removed but thought I would write and ask you if the Comp. would do it before I submitted to an operation with *Doctors tools*," a correspondent might write ominously. To which Mrs. Pinkham responded: "Use the Comp. as you have been using it faithfully and patiently, it will eventually work a cure but you can greatly help its healing power by diet, habits of sleep and rest. Eat largely of the grains, fruits & vegetables, not abstaining altogether from meats, fish & eggs, but eat of these foods sparingly. Be sure to rest when weary—sleep all you need: Lift the weight of all your clothing from your hips and back by the use of straps or a waist and *by all means* avoid instrumental treatment for your trouble."

On general principles, she felt similarly skeptical regarding medical diagnosis; particularly in the field of gynecology, which admittedly, in her day, could hardly be called a dependable science. "In certain diseases," she allowed, "the scientific physician, with the aid of the microscope, &c., may be enabled to give an accurate diagnosis; but with the

patient, the *REMEDY* is the thing." She kept a voluminous casebook, dated 1878 on the flyleaf, to record her own diagnoses and recommendations, and oftener than not both were at variance with those of orthodox practitioners. ("You have taken virulent poisons in the form of medicine. *Drugs should be ignored altogether.*")

For several years after the Compound first came on the market, Mrs. Pinkham offered it for virtually every known disability, up to and including a prolapsed uterus. Her ingenious theory was that it so strengthened and toned the ligaments supporting this organ that it would gradually resume its normal position. Inexplicably, customers often assured her that it *had* performed this feat, thereby confirming her faith in its magic over-all potency. In point of fact, there were only two conditions in which it was useful—menstrual difficulties and the menopause—and at that, it was fifty years after her death before anyone knew how or why. But within these limits it was a genuine help in time of trouble, so that there was always a certain baffling stratum of truth even in the testimonials and the lyric early advertisements.

L Y D I A P I N K H A M  
LIFE'S WOES!  
THOUSANDS DYING ANNUALLY  
FROM CAUSES TO THE WORLD UNKNOWN  
WHILE OTHER THOUSANDS ARE BEING RESTORED TO  
HEALTH, HOPE AND HAPPINESS  
by the use of  
LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND.  
MRS. LYDIA E. PINKHAM OF LYNN, MASS.  
HAS MADE THE DISCOVERY  
HER VEGETABLE COMPOUND  
THE SAVIOUR OF HER SEX

In sum, Mrs. Pinkham's was a counsel of the greatest simplicity: "Take Comp. according to directions and let Drs. alone."

Anxious doctors might and did protest, but more and more women seemed obstinately disposed to turn to Mrs. Pinkham instead. "We Can Trust Her," read the familiar caption, with the accent perceptibly on the *her*. Usually, too, they prefaced their letters with the discouraged statement that they had already exhausted the resources of medical aid.

"The doctor gave me up and wonders how I ever

lived. I wrote for Mrs. Pinkham's advice at Lynn, Mass., and took her medicine. I wish to say to all distressed suffering women, do not suffer longer, when there is one so kind and willing to aid you."

"After giving up all hopes of recovery, I was advised to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. I began to improve from the first bottle."

"I got quite well and have your Compound alone to thank."

"I went to see a doctor—he said that very little could be done."

"I underwent the horrors of local treatment but obtained no benefit."

"I took medicine prescribed by a physician but it did me no good."

"No more doctors for me."

One of Dan's parting admonitions had been to "get out posters, any quantity of them, and stick them all through the country places." In consequence, his mother's face was now encountered not only on the printed page (always "top of column, next reading matter"), but on barns, fences and hoardings wherever the gaze turned, and the first

of the Pinkham Jokes made their tentative appearance.

"‘What play does Lydia Pinkham come to town in?’ asked a little fellow gazing at her picture in the apothecary’s windows.

"‘In the Female Complaints,’ replied his companion after spelling out the advertisement.

(“*Ed.* ‘Dramatically speaking we should judge this new play to be a *mellow drama.*’”)

Or,

“*Young lady:* ‘Oh, I’ve smashed my bottle of Lydia Pinkham’s!’

“*Mother:* ‘Aha! a Compound fracture!’”

Her “prolonged smile” came in for some comment, and called forth at least one protest. “Madam,” a correspondent inquired feelingly, “if it is necessary that you should parade your portrait in every country paper in the U. S., can’t you in mercy to the nation have a new one taken once in a while? Do your hair a little differently, say—have a different turn to your head and look solemn. Anything to get rid of that cast-iron smile. You ought to feel solemn anyway, to think that your

face pervades the mind of the nation like a nightmare."

The editor of the *Southbridge Journal* also took a captious attitude. To him, pictorial advertising *per se* detracted gravely from the dignity of the press, and he could only hope that it would prove a passing fad and nothing more. It might be all very well for those who conducted their papers "solely for *gain*," but it "curdled the blood of those who took any pride in the appearance of their sheets."

Few publishers could be found to agree with him. The great majority, in fact, appeared quite bemused by the new vistas they saw opening up before them; for here was one of the very first demonstrable connections between advertising and sales. "The name of Lydia E. Pinkham is spoken more than that of any other person in the world," one computed gravely, "for every minute during the day two bottles of her Vegetable Compound are sold, reckoning 12 hours to the day—a total of 1440." Another calculated that she must be grossing \$30,000 a month from the sales of her com-



bined products, and whatever the literary merits of her advertising he could not but feel that it was an excessive return. Shakespeare, he reminded his readers fretfully, "received only \$25 for Hamlet."

Another class intimately involved with the success of the business were the nation's druggists, with whom Mrs. Pinkham's relations were unfailingly cordial. The company kept them well supplied with displays—"Please place the portrait of Mrs. Lydia E. Pinkham in a prominent place in the window of your store"—and druggists on their part were among her warmest supporters. "The Veg. Comp. is a staple medicine with us and we like to handle a medicine that sells well," one dealer explained simply.

As for the paying customers, seldom was an ungrateful individual heard from. On these rare occasions Mrs. Pinkham's calm did not desert her, though she allowed a note of controlled asperity to creep into her notation on the case of a Mrs. S. who had consumed eleven bottles, yet annoyingly professed to feel no better than before. "One of those fussy women," Mrs. Pinkham recorded in her

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precise hand, "that don't give credit to anything. I wrote to her that it *had* helped her a great deal, but her blood was low and she did not realize it just now."

## VI



EVER SINCE 1875, when the business was officially launched, no commercial venture could have survived under greater handicaps to confound the skeptics. Today it was modestly flourishing, but long ago Mrs. Pinkham had included among her *Anecdotes of Eminent Persons* a sobering reminder: "Solon who had written the laws of Athens was accustomed to say no man could possess happiness while he lived, because all even to the last day were exposed to uncertain fortune."

In the spring of 1881 Dan came home from Texas. He said he had stood the trip better than he expected, but he had not come back to Lynn looking, as he once dreamed, like someone who had bankrupted a rainbow. He looked what he was, a tired and mortally sick man. He made a valiant attempt to take up his old interests again, and the

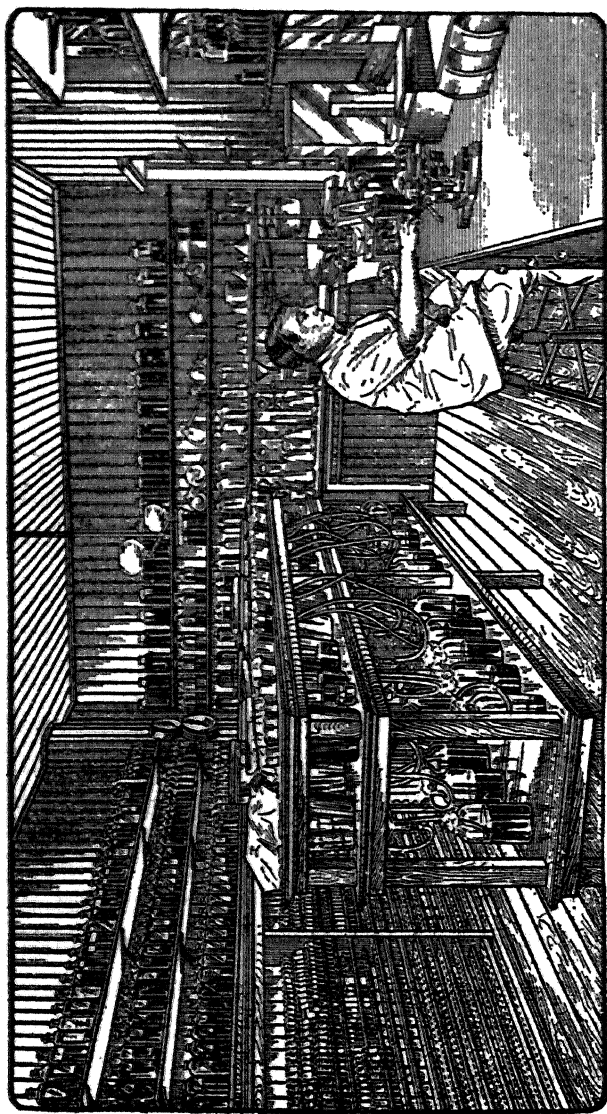
family tried hard to sustain the illusion that he was equal to it. "He has got lots of pluck," said his brother Charles. "He told me he was going to write a piece in the paper on the labor question, and Will said, 'Tell mother we shall make something of our Daniel yet!'"

But early in October, worn out with his year's illness, Dan died in the home on Western Avenue. He was only thirty-two. Everyone in town sincerely mourned him for his promise—as the stylized local obituary read, "He was considered one of the smartest scholars that ever graduated from the Lynn schools. In fact he was one of the most brilliant men that Lynn ever sent forth"—but more because the community had known him as a warm-hearted and courageous man: "Generous to a fault, always first and foremost in every good work." But to the Pinkhams, with their extraordinarily close and compact family circle, no outsider could realize what the loss meant—rendered infinitely more bitter, of course, because the days of hardships like Dan's were over.

The shock of his death, however, forced one decision. So far the business had been a simple

proprietorship, standing for convenience in Will's name but for all practical purposes owned by the whole family, share and share alike. They each contributed what they could in services or money and took what they needed from the proceeds; there were no officers, no accountings, no salaries. Even the bookkeeping was single-entry and rather spasmodic, with entries jotted down as one or other happened to think of them, all interspersed with household and personal items.

But now, shaken by this proof of life's uncertainty, Lydia and Isaac assigned their interest in Dan's estate to Charles, Will and Aroline; and on October 19, 1881, the three formally organized a partnership to be called Lydia E. Pinkham's Sons & Co. It was understood that their mother would remain very much in active control, but she wished actual ownership vested in her children. Will contributed the stock, fixtures, recipes, buildings, horses, carriages, wagons, harnesses and so on, as well as the good will. All profits and expenses were to be divided equally. As a crowning business-like resolve, accurate books were to be kept and an account of stock taken "as often as once in every



The special testing laboratory.

year." The papers were drawn up by Aroline's fiancé, William Gove, whose legal mind must often have been harrowed by the total absence of such formalities heretofore.

A second tragedy followed almost immediately; it had to be faced by the anguished family that Will, like Dan, was consumptive. About a year earlier he had married a Miss Emma Barry, a Lynn girl, and his young wife now took him hurriedly to California in quest of health. But where Dan's illness had been lingering, Will's proved to be what was known as quick consumption. He died in Los Angeles that December, only two months after Dan, and his widow survived him by less than a year.

Will, the youngest son and in many ways the most appealing member of the family, had always been the closest to his mother; his death at the age of twenty-eight was almost more than she could endure. But she had turned to spiritualism years before, almost from its beginnings in 1848, having been so much enamored of the idea of progress that it pleased her to think of it as going on forever. It had further appealed to her by reason of its mild

and undogmatic approach. "The spiritualists do not threaten with anything," an extract in her notebook ran. "They say, 'Investigate and judge for yourselves.' The spiritualists are friends of political and social liberty." (She here appended a list of celebrated men and women the world over who were of the same persuasion, as if to remind herself that intellectually she was in good company.) But after her successive bereavements, she found it a more emotional consolation than before. She and Isaac, who in this as in all things remained her faithful companion, liked to sit quietly side by side at séances waiting for a message; Lynn, like most New England towns in the latter part of the century, now had its local mediums.

Meanwhile her two surviving children were happily married. Charles's bride was Jennie Barker Jones, another Lynn girl and a warm admirer of her famous mother-in-law; they lived just down the street. In January, 1882, Aroline had married Will Gove and gone to live in Salem, but she too was still comfortably within reach.

Mr. Gove had, like the Pinkhams, a Quaker background, and his family, also like theirs, had



been settled in Massachusetts for over two hundred years. Though not many years out of Harvard, he was looked on as a coming man, having handled some rather widely publicized cases. The best known was the suit brought by one George W. Barry in 1877 against Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy. Barry had been a devout follower of Mrs. Eddy, or Mrs. Glover as she then was, during the years when she lived in Lynn at No. 8 Broad Street, an address renowned as the first headquarters of Christian Science. (Incidentally it was part of the old Estes farm, Mrs. Pinkham's girlhood home.) But doubts had gradually undermined his faith, and upon reflection, he had sued Mrs. Eddy for payment on account of such services as "copying the book entitled *Science and Health*, aiding in arrangement of capital letters and some of the grammatical construction . . . aiding in selection of carpets and furniture, carrying in coal and working in the garden." Also, Barry deposed, he had on sundry occasions paid for his mentor's "rent, car-fare, printing, stationery, and boots." (The last item was particularly wounding to Mrs. Eddy, as she had been under the impression that the boots were a

present.) For all this, after two years of litigation, Mr. Gove had won his client compensation in the amount of \$395.40; which, considering the esoteric nature of the testimony, was regarded as no trifling achievement.

In September, 1882, it was decided to terminate the partnership. The business then underwent a second transformation, being incorporated as the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company. Maine had particularly favorable tax laws for an enterprise which still consisted largely of equipment and supplies but very little cash, so the corporate structure was set up there. Charles was elected president and general manager, Aroline, treasurer, and her husband, secretary; and these three constituted the entire board of directors. The company was capitalized at \$11,200, represented by 112 shares of common stock with a par value of \$100. (Through all subsequent vicissitudes, and though each share was estimated later to be worth around \$11,700, the original capitalization and stock issue never changed; brokers, bankers and syndicates might argue in vain.) Charles and Aroline each held forty-nine shares, but in order to qualify Mr. Gove

as an officer and director he was given one share of stock in trust by his wife.

The remaining fourteen shares, constituting a one-eighth interest, went to the estate of Emma Barry Pinkham, Will's widow, and more was to be heard of them later. In fact the happy family atmosphere had only one flaw; relations with "Will's wife's folks" were just a trifle strained. It was held very strongly indeed that this was a Pinkham business. Pinkhams had started it, made all the sacrifices for it, built it up unaided. Will's pretty young wife was dead, poor girl, and she had died childless; there was some difference of opinion as to how much the beneficiaries of her estate—virtual strangers—were entitled to in royalties. Mr. Gove, a scrupulously conscientious man, could understand this feeling, but was often sorely perplexed as to where his duty lay.

For the present, the business was firmly established on the Eastern seaboard and increasingly well known in the country at large. And Mrs. Pinkham was by no means absorbed in the next world to the extent of losing her grip on the present one,

where so much was happening, quite apart from her firm, to keep her vitally interested.

There was, for instance, the emergence of women in business. She could remember a time when in the United States as a whole there had not been one economically independent woman to the hundred square miles, even counting the sempstress and the lowly governess. Now, as she could hear her boy Will proudly pointing out in his valedictory address, women were employed in a great variety of capacities. But he had not mentioned that the main argument in their favor was that they could be hired more cheaply than men, nor yet that they had no legal claim to their earnings, which could be appropriated *in toto* by husband or father. Mrs. Pinkham was not likely to forget this; her mail brought her too many reminders.

The sewing machine had supplanted the sempstress, and the sewing machine had moved into the factory, taking more and more women with it, willingly or reluctantly, as one depression followed another. Women had been allowed to fill temporary vacancies in the civil service during the War, and

had stayed on afterwards; the new telegraph companies found them dependable; and some occupations once the monopoly of men had completely changed hands, so that now it struck customers as a positive anomaly to find a "stout, athletic man" selling ribbons behind a counter.

Many revolutions in folkways were taking place so quietly as to pass almost unnoticed at the time, but *Harper's Bazaar* did perceive the significance of the married woman who began to combine housekeeping and an outside occupation. "Every woman in any of the great centres of society—in any of the large country towns, even—is expected to play a complex role of many duties. She is to keep the home and sometimes do the work of it, do the marketing, bear the children and rear them and teach them to some extent; do all their sewing, do all their nursing and walk the floor all night with them if they are ill. She is expected to do the cooking and ironing; be sometimes a servant and always a lady. . . . And with all this, if she is not exactly expected to do it, yet she frequently does add her mite to the pecuniary support of the family by outside labor of one sort or another."

Mrs. Pinkham, however, was more apt to hear from the woman who held a full-time job during the day and caught up with the housework afterwards, and to her she proffered sympathy as well as her Compound. "Day in and day out, she toils. She is the bread-winner of the family, and must work that others may live. . . . How our hearts ache for the sickly women who work for daily bread at some ill-paid factory employment. . . . Six o'clock—weary women watch for that blessed hour. On the stroke of six ends the day's work at stores, offices, factories, mills where women are employed. But their necessary work at home—sewing, mending, etc.—must be done *after* that time, for 'woman's work is never done.' "

Next, rather adroitly using health as a spring-board, she set out to call indignant attention to the conditions in sweatshops and factories. Over twenty years ago she had clipped for her scrapbook certain heated observations by a young writer till then unknown to her, by name Walt Whitman, on the "miserable system" under which women in the garment and umbrella trades were made to "suffer the most shameful impositions from those who

employ them." Their situation had not improved much in the interval. And long before Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, Dr. Alice Hamilton, or the first trade unions, Mrs. Pinkham was conducting a one-woman campaign, through the medium of her paid advertisements, for safety and sanitary regulations in industry, rest periods, and women personnel managers. (There were many matters affecting female employees that a male overseer, or so she charitably assumed, "never thought of.")

Her style might differ from that of Miss Addams or Miss Wald—"With the sunshine and gladness all crushed out of her life, she goes on until she falls. Oh! this picture is only one of thousands"—but what she had to say was virtually the same in substance, direction and corroborative detail. Hers was the dramatic rather than the statistical approach, but she concentrated on real and easily comprehended abuses; and she reached a wider audience.

WORKING GIRLS  
WILLING, ABLE AND AMBITIOUS  
BUT OFTEN HELD BACK BY AN ILLNESS  
THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND

might lead (before the closing offer of the Compound in alleviation) to an attack on the rule requiring employees to stand the full working day, which was ten to twelve hours. "Saleswomen understand what torture is—continually on their feet whether well or ill." (In this, at least, Mrs. Pinkham was at one with doctors, who were much alarmed by the effects of this practice on the health of their patients.) "Some work in cramped positions, but the great majority of working girls, so to speak, live on their feet. *There is no rest*, and when their ill health becomes apparent, they are at once discharged to make room for others. In the great commercial warehouses devoted to the exhibition and sale of dress and fancy goods, the girls are discharged if they seek temporary relief in the absence of a customer. They must be on their feet all the while, for that is the unalterable rule." The foregoing was unhappily a statement of simple fact, however rhetorical her winding up: "The man of business yields nothing to the interest of humanity, but smiles complacently and

MURDERS WHILE HE SMILES.



In this manner thousands are heartlessly immolated on

*THE ALTAR OF MAMMON."*

Nor did she ignore health hazards in the upper economic brackets. "*SHE DRESSES WELL*, but her Clothes often Cover a Living Death," might be all too gloomily true of the stony-hearted employer's own wife. "A gorgeous costume flashed beneath the brilliant lights of a ball-room. 'A queen of society is radiant tonight.' The nervous hands of a weak woman have toiled day and night, the weary frame and aching head have known no rest —'for the dress *MUST* be finished in time.'

"To that queen of society and her dressmaker we would say a word. One, through *HOT-HOUSE CULTURE*, luxury, and excitement, and the other, through the toil of *NECESSITY*, may some day find their ailments a common cause." (Both, that is, were liable to nervous prostration, fainting spells, dizziness, sleeplessness, backache, and to being prostrated one week out of every four.) "Oh, women, if you must bring upon yourselves these troubles, remember that *LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND* has done more to

## LYDIA PINKHAM

relieve such suffering than any other remedy known. It will enable BOTH to meet the demands of society. Don't hesitate!"

One result of Mrs. Pinkham's far-flung correspondence was that her files now represented a revealing cross-section of a changing society, both rural and urban. Women not only consulted her for medical advice, but gratefully seized the opportunity to unburden themselves on almost every problem that affected their lives. ("No Confidence Has Ever Been Violated. Full details can be given without hesitation. Lydia Pinkham's private letters from ladies in all parts of the world average one hundred a day, and truly has she been a Mother to the Race.") A sociologist wondering about the stresses and strains of American family life in the last century could hardly find a richer mine to work than the Pinkham files, the nearest thing to a Kinsey Survey that the era produced. It seems a pity, in a way, that its million-odd letters still remain Sacredly Confidential; but they do, so that no hopeful researcher need inquire.

Mrs. Pinkham, then, without ever stirring from Lynn, Mass., had gained a very fair idea of the

current state of human relations on most social levels. In the role of counsellor her advice was sensible, restrained and broadminded.

She was particularly concerned to reach the young before their attitudes hardened. ("Young girls, to the thinking mind, are ever a subject of the deepest interest.") She had begun by appealing to their mothers, again by way of her advertising copy. "If the slightest trouble appears which you do not understand, write to Mrs. Lydia Pinkham at Lynn, Mass., and a few timely words from her will show you the right thing to do. This advice costs you nothing, but it may mean life or unhappiness or both."

"Many a dutiful daughter pays in pain for her mother's ignorance," she observed on another occasion (the most perfunctory glance at period literature would be enough to confirm her); and she repeatedly deplored the prudery that made it possible. "False modesty and procrastination are responsible for much female suffering. . . . Young girls are reticent through delicacy, and often withhold what ought to be told. Yet *they* are not to blame, for information on such subjects has been

*withheld from them*, owing to the false interpretation of a mother's duty. **MOTHERS, I WARN YOU!** Watch carefully your daughter's health. When the appetite fails, or there is a growing nervous irritability, extreme lassitude, melancholia, emaciation, the voice trembles, the step is irresolute, eyelids droop, the expression is languid . . . when the young girl is a mystery to herself and friends, *then* her mother should come to her aid."

Mrs. Pinkham herself was inclined to deal bracingly with the young miss in this interesting condition, or contemplating going into a decline. "**LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND** acts promptly in such cases; by its use your daughter will be speedily **RESTORED TO HEALTH.**" As supplementary treatment, brisk walks and a cheerful outlook were emphatically recommended. The pining victim should *not* be encouraged in a taste for morbid poetry, however pious; above all, she should *not* be taken out of school for fear of overtaxing her powers. "This is wrong. Ambitions should be aided, not blasted." (Mrs. Pinkham had a special fondness for The

Studious Girl.) "Thoughtful, intelligent mothers know *WHAT TO DO*. Thousands of rosy-cheeked, energetic and lovable school girls regard Mrs. Pinkham as their mainstay. *THEY ARE RIGHT.*"

If mothers were not, alas, either thoughtful or intelligent, Mrs. Pinkham did not abandon hope, but addressed herself directly to their daughters. "*SCHOOL GIRLS ESPECIALLY INVITED* to write to Mrs. Pinkham for advice regarding their health. All such letters strictly confidential." The response was torrential; all over the country, girls took her at her word, asking her the questions they would not dream of putting to their own mothers.

But Mrs. Pinkham had a sustaining message for those of every age group, almost from the cradle to the grave.

Having survived the trials listed above, the girl in due course married. At first all went well. "The young wife is happy in her new home, her eyes are bright, her step light and free, she enters into all the pleasures of her husband." But after a few years—"Comes a change. The bright eyes are

dulled, the step is heavy. . . . Sure as life, there is some derangement of the uterus or womb, causing backache, irregularity, dizziness, &c. The iron grip of female disease is upon you. Beware of the first symptoms! *NOTHING IN THE WIDE WORLD* has such a record for absolutely curing female ills as. . . .”

Mrs. Pinkham here addressed a few words to the husband, naturally perplexed by this metamorphosis in his hitherto bright-eyed helpmate. An illustration showed him, arms folded, head sunk, wearing full evening dress and an expression of despair. “How gladly would men fly to woman’s aid, did they understand! A light-hearted woman is the joy of a man’s life, but no woman can be happy,” she explained reasonably, “when there is backache, bearing down, or displacements.” Then, returning encouragingly to the wife: “Bounding life and the enthusiasm born of it shed joy in the pathway of the healthy woman. No painful female complaints crush out *HER* life. No ovarian troubles, inflammation, spinal weakness, fainting. . . . Have you any of the symptoms named?”

Sooner or later, a babe arrived to gladden the home. (Its advent might have been mysteriously delayed till the anxious wife began to take the Compound; "A Baby in Every Bottle" had already passed into folklore.) But once the event was over the young mother might get up too soon—being a perfect housekeeper, anxious to "put things to rights"—and would find herself "dragging along, suffering agonies"; reduced to sighing, "*IF ONLY I COULD GET MY STRENGTH BACK!*" More than ever she needed the Compound.

And as babes and yet more babes kept on arriving—"Largely through ignorance, often through indifference, young girls become mothers when little prepared to do so, and they find not only their own health shattered thereby, but also that they are the mothers of weak, delicate children"—she might lapse into a chronically tired and querulous state. "This is a generation of nervous women," remarked Mrs. Pinkham unexpectedly, "but judging from the nervous children now growing up, the next will be even more so." The horrid prevalence among them of convulsions and St. Vitus' Dance appeared

amply to justify her misgivings. The children of today, exposed to all manner of disturbing influences unknown to their counterparts in the allegedly less troubled America of seventy-five years ago, may be high-strung; but at least it is cheering to reflect that not nearly so many of them have fits.

"What picture can equal that of a young mother and child in perfect health? And what a rare sight it is," said Mrs. Pinkham regretfully. How much more common was the spectacle of "CRYING CHILDREN, TIRED MOTHERS, NERVES ALL UNSTRUNG! The mother 'flies to pieces' and scolds. It ruins a child's disposition and reacts upon herself. The sensations of childhood are *lasting*," she went on in quite the modern vein. "Keep the little body *and mind* pleasantly occupied. . . . Calmness is needed in dealing with children. The COMPOUND will build up the mother's system, strengthen her nerves, and enable her to handle a fretful child without a scene. The children will soon realize the difference, and seeing their mother quiet, will themselves become quiet."



**L Y D I A P I N K H A M**  
**OVERWORKED WOMEN**  
**THE WORLD**  
**IS DAILY GROWING BETTER AS**  
**THE VIRTUES OF**  
**LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND**  
**BECOME KNOWN TO WOMEN, FOR**  
**THE HEALTH OF WOMEN**  
**IS THE HOPE OF THE RACE!**

The ordinary housewife, she thought, was too much a slave to drudgery, routine, and the neighbors' watchful scrutiny. Better far to let the dusting go, once in a while, and take the children on a picnic. And while the mother was about it, she had best encourage them to develop self-reliance; Mrs. Pinkham entertained a low opinion of the woman who sacrificed herself for her young. "She has taught others to lean on her till they cannot stand alone. What will become of them if her health is neglected? We urge women to preserve their health and lengthen lives of usefulness."

The next stage in woman's earthly progress was depicted under the caption, "*HOW OLD I LOOK, AND NOT YET THIRTY!*" And again, the

novels of the period bore her out. Women *were* "played out" at thirty; the mourning widower, looking about unobtrusively for a healthy replacement, was a familiar figure in the social scene. (Susan B. Anthony, not yet a professed feminist but tending that way, in her younger days was sought in marriage by one such, a wealthy farmer with a large house, a pump conveniently located not more than thirty yards from the kitchen door, and a sixty-cow dairy. She reminded him very favorably, he said, of his first wife, a hard worker. Miss Anthony, rapidly calculating her own life expectancy if attending upon the same husband, the same pump and the same sixty cows, thanked him but said no.)

"Women expect to fade; they seem to anticipate it," said Mrs. Pinkham with some displeasure. "Volumes are written these days about the duties of women," she added rather tartly, and in what days are they not, "but the real gospel of women's success is the gospel of health."

Next came the menopause, a state normally looked upon with resigned desperation. "There is no period in woman's career which she approaches

with so much anxiety as the 'change of life.' " All quite unnecessary, Mrs. Pinkham pronounced. Keep yourself in good general physical condition, remain calm, and take the Compound in standard dosage. "It is surprising what happy changes *LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND* brings about in this condition. So marked is its power that all the trying days of the Change may be passed over in perfect safety. Women who have been dreading the Change, who have been taught to look upon it as something horrible, may now lay all such anxiety aside. Thousands of letters from women tell me that their life of distress and sleeplessness was changed to one of perfect comfort almost immediately."

Eased through the menopause, however, the woman might still fall into the despondent conviction that life was over for her; once more, how wrong she was. As against *OLD AT THIRTY*, Mrs. Pinkham firmly set the objective, *YOUNG AT SIXTY*. A fashionably coiffed dowager was chosen to illustrate what she had in mind. Mrs. Pinkham felt sorry for the pathetic, wrinkled grandmother meekly huddled in her little shawl, minus

teeth, "kept" by her children and with not a cent to bless herself with after a lifetime of work, but she did not really care for the type. *Her* model obviously enjoyed a dependable digestion, sound nerves, a well-stocked mind, plenty of outside interests and some money of her own—a grandmother, in fact, very much like herself. "Women who know the Laws of Nature and Obey Them may live to a Green Old Age. A charming GRANDMOTHER—What a pleasant influence in the home is a delightful old lady—in good health!"

Mrs. Pinkham, it became more evident with every year that passed, was an astoundingly ambitious woman. She had not exhausted what she wished to convey even in her all-compassing advertisements. Moreover, she had been appalled by much that her correspondence disclosed. Women were abysmally ignorant concerning their own anatomy. And what of all those girls who had turned to her for advice they literally could not get from any other source? These distressed her most of all. As teachers and social workers testify, the current odds against a young person's obtaining factual sex information at the right time can be

fairly discouraging; but in Mrs. Pinkham's day they were astronomical.

Pondering these things, in her later years she began to write a book; and it was a remarkable achievement. She planned it simply as her contribution to the general health and welfare: "The women of this country must have physical education, if we are to have a people strong and hearty." It had nothing to do with the Compound, though her company distributed it—free—and each copy bore the familiar photograph and signature, "Yours for Health." Issued and re-issued for years after her death under half a dozen titles ("compiled from the writings of Lydia E. Pinkham") it remained the only work of its kind available for free distribution till the government began issuing its bulletins on pre-natal and post-partum care, child training, and so on; and at any price, her little treatise was one of the best.

In a completely unsentimental way, she described the phenomena of puberty, conception, birth and the menopause. Her physiology was accurate and she used (this was rare) the correct scientific terms for the parts and functions of the

body. None of it would have to be altered today, though it might be added to. Ignoring the prevailing morass of superstition and unhealthy mystery, she did a realistic and lucid job.

Its impact was the greater in that it contained so much material almost unknown outside medical circles. As a basic instance, the Western world might be amused by the naiveté of South Sea tribes so primitive that they perceived no connection between the birth of a child and an event that had occurred some nine months earlier; but till quite recently the Western world itself had not been much better informed, apart from having rather thoroughly grasped that there *was* a connection. (This was not to say that all who wrote to Mrs. Pinkham had grasped it. Some of them were spending sleepless nights of terrified conjecture as to the effects of their first kiss.)

In any event, it was only in 1832 that the human ovum was discovered; and it was not till 1875 that Professor Hertwig of Jena was first enabled to describe the mechanics of fertilization. When all this appeared in Mrs. Pinkham's little book (with illustrations showing The Female Pelvis and its

Contents, quite a surprise in itself), it came decidedly under the heading of News.

Till 1875, too, the whole nature of ovulation and the reproductive process had been a matter of guesswork. It had not even been known that menstruation had any bearing on either. This was looked on as not only woman's curse, but a wholly irrelevant and gratuitous curse; and the tabus with which Mrs. Pinkham's correspondents surrounded it, from isolated farms to the most exclusive boarding-school, would not have seemed out of place in an African kraal. Mrs. Pinkham had always objected to hearing it described as monthly sickness, and had maintained that it should not be in the least disabling; but now she could describe it authoritatively and reassuringly as "the balance wheel of a woman's life." Singlehanded, she thus disposed of many a disagreeable old wives' tale.

Her book, designated as required reading for, among others, "Married Women and Those About to Be," was the first facts-of-life work to obtain a wide circulation (millions); and it is safe to say that its quiet influence was greater than that of any American novel written in her lifetime.





## VII



MANY OBSERVERS, enviously or admiringly according to temperament, considered that the Pinkhams to date had enjoyed nothing but prodigious good luck, though it had in point of fact been liberally interspersed with tragedy. In the next few years, at any rate, they encountered enough assorted catastrophes to have wrecked any venture less solidly established.

The first was their entry into foreign trade, an ambition that had been simmering in their minds almost from the start. Mrs. Pinkham had numerous correspondents in England from 1880 on; she had also made a brief survey of the South American market. But it was a foregone conclusion that their first foreign branch should be set up in Canada. Nearly all Canadians read American newspapers sooner or later, including the advertisements, and a steady trickle of inquiries had been coming across

the line. (The French-Canadian woman was often *une ruine nerveuse*; her *douleurs* were *atroces*.) But the ad valorem duty made the retail price of the Compound in Canada prohibitive.

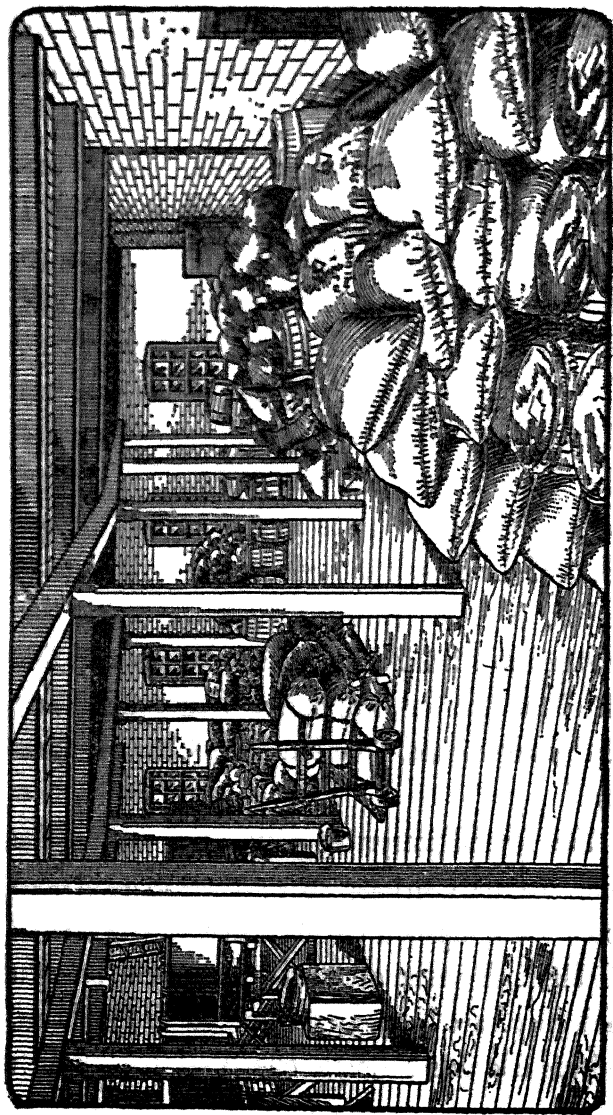
Mrs. Pinkham called another family conference, and on occasions like this when they all got together, caution was never in the ascendant. Instead of retreating from life after the death of her two sons, or at least halting to consolidate her gains, her instinct was all to branch out and push farther ahead. The prospect of security and a modest success held no allure whatever for her. The upshot was that they decided to open a laboratory at Stanstead, Quebec, and make their medicine on the spot. They also knew just the young man to appoint as manager. He had worked in the Lynn plant, knew the process, and was both popular and enterprising. How enterprising, they little guessed.

Charlie was deputed to visit the new plant every few months, and at first his letters to his young wife reflected nothing but satisfaction. They were also pleasingly full of family affection. Hitherto he had been somewhat obscured by his more colorful younger brothers, but he was a very attractive

person in his own right—genial, open-handed, totally unaffected and disposed to live with considerable gusto.

“My dear Wife,” he might write, “This is another nice clear day only very cold. It is well I brought my sealskin cap and thick gloves. Such an immense quantity of snow I never saw, it is half way to the top of the dining room window. . . . It is well I have bought that pair of horses I was talking about. They are a splendid pair, look just alike, they are black and very stylish. . . . I want you and Mother to go to a cloak maker and get measured for a cloak so I can have seal skins made for you. If Arrie (Aroline) wants one let her get measured too. I think I can get very nice ones this side of the line for \$125 apiece. Hug yourself and the children for me. Your Husband, Chas. H. Pinkham.”

After several prosperous years, word reached the family that the Canadian manager was in mysterious trouble. Investigation disclosed that he was also in jail. His fault was an excess of business zeal, brought on, it may have been, by propinquity to Pinkhams, and his tale was a simple one. Very few of their



The herb room.

supplies could be purchased in Canada; herbs, bottles, circulars and so on were shipped up from Lynn. The manager's downfall dated from the autumn day when, with a check to cover the next shipment in his pocket, he met a farmer driving a flock of young turkeys to market. The shipment was not due for some time; it occurred to him that if he bought the turkeys himself he could fatten them up for Thanksgiving, sell them at a profit, reimburse the company and have something left over for his own celebration.

This would have been practicable if the goods had not perversely arrived ahead of schedule. Since he was not in a position to get them out of Customs in the conventional way, the manager had therefore hitched up his team at midnight and driven down to the freight yard, broken into the car, loaded the consignment into his wagon and conveyed it back to the plant.

The Customs regulations in small towns were sometimes easygoing, but not as easygoing as all that. When Charles arrived on the scene, the manager was, as mentioned, in jail. And the first intimation the harassed Pinkhams had of his release

was when they heard of his second arrest. It appeared that he was now operating in reverse, having been intercepted smuggling four Chinese into the United States in a load of hay. By this time, of course, he was no longer in the company's employ; Charles had closed down the ill-starred Canadian branch altogether.

At the same time they were encountering more serious troubles at home with their advertising, or rather over-advertising, and with the first professional agent hired to handle it. It was not that their copy—now, at the enthusiastic behest of the agent, appearing in papers coast-to-coast—failed to produce results; sales were increasing, but never fast enough to keep up with the charges. Dan in a way had set the precedent; in the early days he had been all for advertising up to the very limit of their credit. But the need for that had passed, and besides, few papers displayed as accommodating a spirit as their smallest creditor, *The Watchman* ("Devoted to the Interests of Humanity and Spiritualism") which advised Mrs. Pinkham: "There is now 6 months advertising due us which is \$5. Please remit at once or send us 8 bottles of your Compound."

Professional advertising was still fairly new, its ethics might be described as unstandardized, and the field was full of pitfalls for the unwary. The Pinkhams' agent was merely following accepted practice when he bought up blocks of newspaper space and resold it to them at a profit; they were staggered, however, when they discovered just what that profit was. As matters stood, it gradually dawned upon them that the agent had contrived to make himself their largest creditor. A little later they awoke to the abrupt realization that legally he was in a position to take over their whole business any time he felt so inclined. This too was not unheard of; there had been rumors of similar instances. And he was already hinting that he might, to his infinite regret, be "obliged to press them."

Fast action was precipitated when Charles, quite by accident, discovered that he was being overcharged by about fifty per cent on his account with the *Boston Globe*. The publisher helpfully brought out his records one day, and Charles was violently jolted by his first glance at them. What his national overcharges might be, if this were a sample, he could not even surmise. There was one way to find

out and that was to ask. He took a hurried but illuminating cross-country trip to call on other publishers, and heard much the same story in every case. The only bright side to the trip was the discovery that the Pinkham name had preceded him wherever he went. The wives of the Latter Day Saints, for instance, were very partial to the Compound. "I see it in the Drug stores here as well as everywhere else I have spent time to look around," he informed his wife from Salt Lake City, signing himself "Your Affectionate Mormon." And it was a tribute to his naturally high spirits that he could write from San Francisco: "I tell you Jennie this is a huge old trip. I wouldn't take a good deal for the experience. In a few days I shall point my nose for home. I should really enjoy a winter here with you and the children to hug up once in a while. From the best and most affectionate Husband you have on the Pacific Coast, Chas. H. Pinkham."

The dismaying situation he faced on his return was that the company was not only insolvent, but in debt to the extent of some \$125,000.

Charles often said later that nine out of ten men would have done the sensible thing and made an



assignment of the firm, but that he personally was "bound to be the tenth and keep going." He did, too. Virtually all advertising was canceled. He offered to give notes to his creditors, and such was the impression he gave of rock-ribbed New England integrity that none of them refused. On one memorable afternoon he signed forty-three \$1,000 notes. Deprived of the stimulus of advertising, sales dropped for a time by nearly three-fourths; but he held to his resolve till the company was out of debt, and once out, it stayed out.

By temperament Charles was an expansive man; he enjoyed prosperity and good living and never grew blasé about them, but he had a wide saving streak of caution. Thereafter, whenever high-pressure salesmen tried to tempt him with country estates, orange groves in Florida or what not, his stock reply was: "My policy in life is one home, one wife, and one country." Another of his dicta, rather more sententious, was: "The reason why our business was finally built on a firm financial foundation was because we were all so poor in those early days that we had to make every dollar count." There was

an element of truth in this, but it was not the whole story by any means.

Meanwhile the dubious agent, confronted with cumulative evidence of his perfidy, had agreed without demur to settle for ten thousand dollars, the first figure that came to Charles's mind. Yet he could not thereupon be sent on his way, as everyone had assumed; for it now transpired that as a precaution against just such a contingency, he had managed to acquire the troublesome fourteen shares of stock from "Will's wife's folks."

Despite these worries, in 1882 Mrs. Pinkham was, as always, busy. She and Isaac lived very comfortably on royalties from the company; they were, as poor Dan had wistfully hoped, "easy on money matters." What was more important, she moved in an atmosphere of freedom and achievement. She had become, as she recognized matter-of-factly, one of the best-known women in the world; her name was a household word. A running battle with scoffers had been conducted and she had emerged unruffled, with a personal following that many a politician might envy.

"The list of Ten Outstanding American Women

arranged by a New York newspaper is singularly inadequate," she could read in her morning paper. "There is a woman whose fame is spread from the Golden Gate to Calais, Maine. Her face is familiar to all who have eyes to see. Her cheering motto is graven on the hearts of old and young. It has crossed the Atlantic and Pacific, echoed in the defiles of the Balkans and been sung by Geisha girls to homesick missionaries. Patagonia is full of her glory, and the story of her life has shortened nights in Spitzbergen. Her name—sound, ye drums and trumpets, and oh, ye bugles blow!—her name is Lydia Pinkham."

Scoffing there was still, in plenty, but on the whole it carried a not unfriendly ring. Humorists, professional and amateur, were deeply in her debt. They devised laborious hoaxes; it was reported with the aid of every circumstantial detail that she was engaged at one time to Bill Nye, at another to Samuel J. Tilden; or, descending to the third generation, that her infant granddaughter was the fiancée of Edward Bok, the dignified bachelor editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. "Not once, not twice, not thrice she came," was the professional verdict of

LYDIA PINKHAM

*Printers' Ink*, "but every day, every week, every month, until she was as well established in mind and memory as one's nearest relative." There were times, it was true, when the very ubiquitousness of her disembodied image induced a slightly haunted feeling in the onlooker:

*Whate'er I do, where ere I be,  
At home, abroad, on land or sea,  
Both day and night it follows me,  
That face.*

*No feet there are to make a din,  
'Tis severed just below the chin,  
And yet it wears a peaceful grin,  
That face.*

*The features never once have changed,  
The hair is never disarranged,  
That glassy smile is ne'er estranged—  
That face.*

*I breathe it tenderly and low,  
'Tis not my reverence to show,  
I dare not say it loud, for oh!  
'Tis Lydia's.*

LYDIA PINKHAM

The same sentiment was more poignantly expressed in *The Dartmouth*:

*There's a face that haunts me ever,  
There are eyes mine always meet;  
As I read the morning paper,  
As I walk the crowded street.*

*Ah, she knows not how I suffer,  
Hers is now a world-wide fame,  
But 'til death that face shall greet me;  
Lydia Pinkham is her name.*

And there was, of course, what came to be the official Lydia Pinkham Song, echoing from campus to stag dinner in versions more or less ribald as the circumstances might warrant, but all ending with the loyal refrain:

*Oh, we'll sing of Lydia Pinkham  
And her love for the human race.  
How she sells her Vegetable Compound,  
And the papers they publish her face.*

The domestic surroundings of the business were still much stressed. Thus a brightly colored card for distribution to favored customers—"Put this in your Album"—introduced them to Lydia E. Pinkham's grandchildren, two decorative, ringleted little girls wearing flowered muslin frocks and high-buttoned shoes, linked fondly arm-in-arm and unquestionably radiant with health. In the newspapers, too, the public saw depicted Mrs. Pinkham herself and Charles with a small boy and girl at his knee, and might overhear this fragment of family conversation.

"*Lydia Pinkham*: My son, I was just thinking how our little group of three generations so strongly demonstrates and illustrates my theory of the *transmission of health* from mother to child. And what can be more striking than the fact that my vigorous health is reproduced in your darling children?"

Her daughter and daughter-in-law were alike devoted to her; there was much visiting back and forth, and she was always glad rather grandly to "send the carriage to the depot" to meet the Goves. Mr. Gove felt certain misgivings as to Mrs. Pinkham's spiritualism, but strove to keep an open mind

and politely conceal his incredulity. "There was a séance in the Pinkham parlor tonight," he noted in his Journal in September, 1882. "Present: Mr. and Mrs. P., Jennie, Mrs. Tucker, Mr. Conway, Arrie, and Mrs. Sanborn, who acted as medium. Mrs. Tucker played and Jennie sang. The room was quite thoroughly darkened. . . . At the end Mrs. Sanborn said things which purported to be the utterances of a spirit, 'Starlight.' Of course there is nothing convincing in that."

Séances were usually held on Saturday evenings. But on October 21, he wrote, "There have been no séances this or last Saturday night, they have been suspended I am told, and Mrs. Sanborn has what she calls 'development séances' in the middle of the week attended only by Mrs. Pinkham and one or two more of 'the faithful.' . . . Arrie and in fact everybody but Mr. and Mrs. Pinkham have lost faith in her."

Of more mundane interest was the fact that Oscar Wilde was lecturing in Boston on "Decorative Arts." And the ex-Reverend Mr. Pillsbury, more radical by the year, turned up again in Salem. "November 26th: In the evening it began to snow and Mrs.

Pinkham, Arrie and I rode down to Armory Hall in the storm to hear Parker Pillsbury lecture upon 'The New and Old in Religion.' He is not satisfied with sexual equality, but says women are going to be far above men, which I consider wild. . . . Mrs. Pinkham introduced him to me after the lecture."

On December 20, Mrs. Pinkham renewed acquaintance with a yet older friend when Frederick Douglass, now elderly and loaded with dignities, came back to lecture and was received with marked deference. "A little after seven," wrote Mr. Gove, "Arrie and I went up to the Essex House, saw Frederick Douglass who was just leaving for the lecture hall. J. N. Buffum was there and wanted to get him away from us to go home with him, but I didn't consent, though fearing we would not suit Douglass so well. Buffum introduced us." The lecture was on John Brown. "It lasted nearly two hours, the hall being full, and though it seemed to need condensation in some places, some of it was very fine. Especially where he described Brown's mode of life."

The intellectuals of Salem and Lynn, it might be



noticed, solved the vexatious problem of where to put up a visiting Negro speaker with exemplary ease and social assurance. That is, they asked him home to spend the night; after a little friendly dispute as to who was to "have" him. On this occasion, Mr. Gove won out over old Mr. Buffum, who was the mayor, the local shoe magnate, and one of Massachusetts' leading liberals. Next morning "Douglass came down after eight," Mr. Gove continued placidly, "and the carriage came and took him to Lynn a little after half past nine. At breakfast we had a very pleasant time talking to him—talked on Greenbackism, which he calls a great humbug, on the tariff, and the work to be done next in politics—he indicated Temperance and Anti-Monopoly."

Christmas now approaching, the Goves decided on a bookcase for Mrs. Pinkham, whose library was always expanding. They had also been commissioned by her to buy Christmas presents—including a "complete set of George Eliot's works, costing six dollars"—for some of her friends.

Mrs. Pinkham had too much on her mind to attend to this in person, being anxious about her

husband, who had had "an ill turn for a few days past." She had been nursing him night and day, and was very tired but relieved to see that he seemed a good deal better, when she herself suffered a paralytic stroke two days before Christmas.

A saddened holiday season ensued, with Mrs. Pinkham in bed attended by a nurse, her daughter Arrie, and a cousin, Marianna Estes. She was too ill for Isaac to be allowed to see her, which distressed them both. Speech was difficult for her, but on Christmas Day she "succeeded in telling about all the presents by signs, etc." (For Arrie she had a gold watch and a pearl-cased opera glass.)

There were times in the next few months when she seemed much improved. Her sofa was moved into the sitting room, and on good days she could sit up for an hour or so. She retained her determined faith in Mrs. Sanborn, a frequent and solicitous caller, but sometimes felt too tired to see her; at such times the medium "gave Mr. Pinkham a sitting."

At first Mrs. Pinkham was hopeful, remarking that the boys (she meant Dan and Will) wanted her to live for another twenty years. But as months of helplessness went by, she began to feel that she

## LYDIA PINKHAM

"would rather be with them," and she gauged her chances calmly. One night in May she patted Arrie's hand, repeating an old family endearment ("My little girl—the only little girl I have got") and said she "hardly thought she would be here much longer." She died on May 17, 1883. At the funeral two days later, attended from far and near, her famous neighbors, the Singing Hutchinsons, then in retirement, made a point of reassembling in her honor. One of the last arrangements she made had been characteristic: it was that some token of remembrance be given the psychic Mrs. Sanborn. And on June 11 Mr. Gove duly noted: "In the afternoon Arrie and I and Mr. Pinkham rode downtown and got a gold watch and chain and presented it to Mrs. Sanborn, as Mrs. Pinkham requested Arrie before her death."

Isaac went to live with the Goves in Salem. He had lately set up in the real estate business again—"pleasantly passing the evening of his life in the midst of a prosperity which he can still aid by his counsel and advice," as the local paper said. He lived on for six years, a gentle but rather shadowy

and lost old man; he died in 1889 and was buried in Lynn beside his wife.

As far as the company was concerned, there was no break in continuity. Advertising had been greatly curtailed, but the Department of Advice went on. Mrs. Pinkham had laid out a definite line to follow and impressed it thoroughly on her family and also on the lady typewriters, who had achieved a curious degree of identification with their employer. It was *her* name, *her* ideas, *her* face on the label, that carried the business through the next trying years.

First there was the problem of retrieving the outstanding shares from their agent. (He had turned up at Mrs. Pinkham's funeral ostentatiously bearing a fifty-dollar floral harp, which was felt to be in the worst possible taste.) His shares had not given him the influence he anticipated, but they did have a very considerable nuisance value; and besides, the mere fact that they were held by an outsider was intolerable to both Pinkhams and Goves. At any rate, they were now doing so little in the way of newspaper advertising that he gradually became discouraged. By 1887, at the cost of tireless effort, sacrifice and diplomacy, Charles suc-

ceeded not only in paying off the last of the firm's indebtedness, but in buying back the fourteen shares.

If, at this point, he had kept them, the company would have been spared untold tribulation, ironically culminating years later in a family feud of classic New England proportions. But Charles was thoroughly imbued with the deep Pinkham sense of family solidarity, and more than that, with an understandably high regard for the business capacities of its women. In short, he divided the shares with Mrs. Gove, his sister, making them equal owners.

Meanwhile, after the first drop, sales were holding up surprisingly well. When Mrs. Pinkham died the business had been grossing just under \$300,000 a year, of which well over half had been spent on advertising. For a brief period they were now, as Charles told an interviewer, "experiencing the extreme felicity of hanging on to what came in instead of sharing it with the newspapers."

This made possible the first distribution of dividends in 1886. Charles's method of announcing it had been to invite the Goves to Thanksgiving din-

ner and wrap Aroline's check in her napkin. The amount was not disclosed, but it was sufficient to build the impressive Gove house on Lafayette Street in Salem at the same time that Charles was putting up his own sumptuous mansion—an ornament to the city, to quote the Lynn press—on Western Avenue, a block from the plant. It stood in three acres of landscaped grounds, and with its trees and gardens, not to mention its famed telescope, it was much favored for lawn parties in support of worthy causes (such as the Boston W.C.T.U., which could always be sure of lavish non-alcoholic refreshments, Japanese lanterns and a discreetly hidden orchestra).

Charles was now a leading citizen, a Park Commissioner, a director of the National City Bank, a generous supporter of schools and hospitals. But he retained his own individuality. In winters he liked to drive his fast horses in the snow on Ocean Street; in the summers he raced them at Reedville, Franklin Park and other tracks in the local circuit. He was a happy extrovert, a joiner, a mixer; he relished a fragrant cigar and a comfortable chair in his favorite club. All in all, Chas. H. was a cheerful sight in that era of dyspeptic millionaires and, what

was more remarkable, not a soul envied him. "He has succeeded as he deserved," was the local consensus.

He had also built and equipped a new laboratory, the last word in modernity. ("All appliances for the perfecting of the medicine are here provided.") He expected it to last out his time, but within ten years it had to be more than quadrupled in size. The capacity of the macerating jars was increased from two to thirty gallons, the percolators from four to fifty gallons, and so on. The first storage tanks had been hundred-gallon Duff Gordon sherry butts; now they were cypress tanks holding from three to six thousand gallons, still later to be replaced by glass-lined steel. Everything was sterilized, a model of cleanliness; the plant still attracted visitors by the hundreds. And whereas the bottles had hitherto been filled, corked, sealed and wrapped by hand, there were rumors that breath-taking automatic machinery was about to be introduced.

"In the new Lydia Pinkham laboratory at Lynn, Mass.," the representative of a Boston newspaper wrote respectfully, "Chas. H. Pinkham, the general manager, will install an endless chain plant of his

own contriving, which will seize the boxes, carry them through the packing room and deliver them through a spout ready for shipping. What amazes a visitor to the works is the numberless stone jars, each with its apron of white rubber cloth, holding the famous compound in process of maceration. . . . The mammoth tanks. . . . The pleasant odor is redolent of the fields and forests."

Since Charles had the contemporary passion for efficiency, he next organized the business by departments, delegating authority to a man or woman at the head of each. After that, to all appearances, it ran effortlessly by itself. In the ivy-walled buildings on their shaded street, no one ever seemed to hurry. It was purely a paternalistic enterprise, of the kind beginning to be looked upon with suspicion; but everyone agreed that in the Pinkham plant the happy family atmosphere was real, and not merely a fiction pleasing to the employers. In all its history it never experienced a hint of labor trouble. (For one thing, labor costs were among its smallest items; it could well afford its high wages, bonuses, and numerous perquisites and amenities.) Chas. H. himself was universally addressed as Charlie.



Most of the older employees were neighbors who had known him, as they said, from a boy; he and they would have felt very foolish if he had suddenly become Mr. Pinkham.

With all shares safely back in the family, and with their first agent at length disposed of, the question of future policy now loomed full of uncertainty. They were to a peculiar degree dependent upon advertising, and it was apparent that the extreme felicity of coasting along on their own momentum was over. But the wrong kind of publicity would be worse than none, and not many had the founder's sure touch.

In the fall of 1889 a small, very dapper young advertising solicitor and former newspaperman, James T. Wetherald, called at Lynn on behalf of his agency; it was a well-established Boston concern. He asked Charles point-blank "if he ever intended to do any more advertising." (The Pinkham ads had been widely missed.) Charles replied, rather forbiddingly: "If I ever find an *honest* agent who can write the kind of copy I want."

Look no farther, said young Mr. Wetherald briskly, and he was as good as his word. Next week

he was back to submit a whole series of layouts, and Charles could see that they were nothing short of inspired. Rendered wary by experience, however, he restricted the first experiment to the state of Maine. Sales overnight, as if by magic, resumed their upward spiral. "We tried it on the dog," Charles liked to recall with satisfaction, "and it worked so well that I told J. T. I would appropriate \$25,000 for him to spend the following year." That was 1890, and Wetherald stayed with the Pinkhams till his death thirty-six years later. Eventually he formed his own agency, with the Pinkham account as its mainstay.

His copy followed Mrs. Pinkham's with singular fidelity in many ways, and the effect was enhanced by frequent recapitulations of the romantic early history of the Compound ("First Made on a Kitchen Stove!") But one unexpected development was that from the moment a man took over her advertising, it became markedly more genteel.

Undoubtedly Wetherald knew what he was doing—the sales proved that; perhaps the country as a whole *was* coming to set a higher store on the niceties—but the contrast was often very diverting.

Mrs. Pinkham, for example, had been wont to urge in a forthright way, "Keep clean. Take baths." Mr. Wetherald preferred to murmur confidentially, "Every fastidious woman knows that frequent baths are essential to health and beauty. Women know the influence of beauty on men. . . ."

But by all odds the clearest demarcation showed in his emphasis on the exclusively feminine nature of the business. "A Woman Best Understands a Woman's Ills" was twisted sharply out of the meaning Mrs. Pinkham had originally striven to convey, till it was now suggested that there was something highly indecorous *per se* in the spectacle of a woman's consulting a male physician.

This would greatly have astonished Mrs. Pinkham. She had advised women candidly and in no uncertain terms to stay away from doctors, but *never* on the grounds of prudery or squeamishness, which had always been profoundly distasteful to her. Simply and solely, she had felt that the doctors of her day knew far too little about a woman's insides.

"I HATE TO ASK MY DOCTOR," became the new theme. ("Examination by a male physician is a hard trial to a delicately organized woman. She

puts it off as long as she dares and is only driven to it by fear of some dreadful ill.")

Coming when it did, this was unfortunate, since gynecology had enormously advanced since Mrs. Pinkham's time. It was not nearly so true as it might once have been that "women can never obtain from the *opposite* sex such information as would enable them to recognize the nature of their ailments, or to place them in a position to help themselves." ("Did a man ever have a backache like the dragging, pulling ache of a woman?" Mr. Wetherald demanded sympathetically, assuring himself in the next breath, "No. It Is Impossible.") Operative gynecology had made the most spectacular progress, and in new techniques American doctors led the world. But women's early distrust of such surgery, and of doctors' presumed callous eagerness to operate at the slightest excuse, was now deeply ingrained.

Wetherald also seized happily upon the fact that in the Lydia E. Pinkham office, every letter was "opened by a woman, read by a woman, seen only by a woman." The Department of Advice was at present headed by Charles's wife, a soft-voiced

woman of much charm. She had undertaken it at considerable personal sacrifice, as she had small children and was contentedly occupied with them, her house, her beautiful gardens and her charities. "ABSOLUTE SECRECY," Mr. Wetherald solemnly promised. "*Men Never See Your Letters.* Would you want a strange man to hear all about your particular disease? Would you feel like sitting down and telling him all those sacred things which should be known only by women? It isn't natural for a woman to do this; it isn't in keeping with her finer sense of refinement. Oh, my sisters, if you will not tell a doctor your troubles, do tell them to a woman who stands ever ready to relieve you! Is it right for you to pass such a Godsend by?

"NO BOYS AROUND," he continued, repressing a palpable shudder. "How would it be if some boy opened the letters, stole time to read a few before they were handed to other boy-clerks to distribute (and probably *read*) around the office? It makes one almost indignant to think how light and trivial these serious matters are so often regarded!"

But—"how different all this is!"—the Pinkham

setting was "womanly in every way. Long rows of desks, at each of which a woman is writing words of cheering hope, invaluable discourses of sympathy and advice to eager sufferers throughout the extent of the civilized world. From this room man is absolutely excluded. What a satisfaction that knowledge is to every modest woman! *EVEN THE MAILING* is done solely by women and girls. So you can rest absolutely assured that your confidence has been guarded *TO THE END*. (This is certified to by the mayor and postmaster of Lynn. Write for free booklet containing these certificates.)" As the ultimate safeguard, answered letters were still jealously preserved from the prying male gaze. "Only women have ever had, *or ever will have*, access to the files which line the walls of this interesting room!"

While all this was perfectly true, and as a general rule struck a responsive chord, there were times when the insistent harping on one note evoked a certain restlessness in his audience. "The cuts in the Pinkham booklet present to us an Adamless Eden," complained one reader. "The very office-boy is a girl. The bird on the weathervane is unmis-

takably a hen. . . . The severe array of discreet virgins in the writing-room is like the company at a Sororis dinner. It is unfortunately necessary to hire a few men in the bottling room, but they have all outgrown the riotous passions of youth, and I am told that they are forbidden on pain of death to read the labels. I do not believe the story that, in her eagerness to respect the modesty of her afflicted sex, Mrs. Pinkham will not ship goods on trains that carry the mails."

Also, it regrettably often happened that when kindred spirits were gathered together, it seemed a good idea at some point in the evening to write a facetious letter to Mrs. Pinkham. A typical result, from one who described himself as a traveling salesman but whose communication somehow bore the marks of composite literary effort along Fraternity Row, read in part:

"Dear Madam, I have nearly got myself in trouble on account of your good medicine. As I travel some I often find good opportunities to give your medicine a very good rekkommend so I saw a married lady some months ago that looked in very delicate health, so I rekkommended the use of

## LYDIA PINKHAM

your Vegetable Compound and the result was a big healthy baby boy. Well you see how it is. I get the blame. . . . And I have just heard of a second case where the lady got too healthy and they are throwing out some very strong hints at me. Maybe you would advise me what to do?"

To offset these coarse productions, however, there was the request, apparently put in all earnestness, that a grateful admirer whose female relatives had been inestimably benefited by the Compound be allowed to christen his yacht the *Lydia E. Pinkham*. ("It will be a constant advertisement both on sea and on land.")

Ever since 1883, the company had carefully publicized the fact that women were no longer writing to the original Mrs. Pinkham, but to her daughter-in-law. A widely distributed illustration indeed showed the two in a last conference. "LYDIA E. PINKHAM TO MRS. CHAS. H. PINKHAM: 'My daughter, you have spent many years of your life in aiding me to compile these records. An analysis of every case of female disease ever brought to my attention is here; this will aid you in perpetuating my work.' " That her work *would* be



perpetuated, Wetherald later explained, had been "guarded by her foresight from the start. Every suffering woman applying to her received personal attention, and the entire details of every case were *recorded*. These records are today compiled in a library of reference, *the largest in the world*, contain facts not to be found elsewhere, and are now available to the women of the world. Women everywhere cherish grateful remembrance of LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND, and ever bless its discoverer."

Despite these conscientious efforts, repeated year after year, a Seattle newspaper in 1895 declared hotly: "But of all the bare-faced frauds commend me to the Lydia Pinkham ads. Now this very nice old lady died upwards of ten years ago. Yet to this day respectable women . . . write letters to Lydia Pinkham and tell how one bottle of her nostrum saved their lives and how they now feel like new women, and go into details of female irregularities with a shocking disregard to the proprieties! When one stops to consider that Lydia Pinkham is long since dead and *left no children*, nor any recipes of her *valuable female lotions*, it would appear

as though someone is working the old lady's name for all there is in it."

Other legends had sprung up, too. One was that no such person as Lydia Pinkham had ever existed; it was merely a trade name. Another was reflected in this hortatory letter from Chattanooga, Tennessee. "You doubtless are not aware that I know old "Mrs. Lydia" is a young quack of the male sex. This fact is more widely known Mr. Lydia than you have any idea.

"I call things carried on in this way a fraud.

"When it is generally known throughout the country that the fool women have been writing their secrets to a man, it will make them feel disgusted at themselves. Don't show yourself in the guise of an old female any longer, 'Mr. Lydia E. Pinkham!'" "

## VIII



THE PRESS WEL-  
comed the Pinkhams back with bravos. "Eight hundred thousand dollars for newspaper advertising in a single year!" was breathed. "It seems impossible, yet this was the amount spent last year by the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company. It is probably the largest appropriation ever made in the United States, and that means the world, by a proprietary medicine concern." Charles was much sought out by reporters, and though the art of the interview had not yet been perfected, he was fully equal to them.

"Fortune, I trust, has attended your efforts?" a representative of the *Boston Globe* might open in the stately manner then in vogue. To which Charles returned imperturbably, "Yes, we have made some money, if that is what you mean."

"Then," ventured the reporter, "the fact of your

not advertising during the last few years is not attributable to a lack of success in your business, as certain parties would have it appear?"

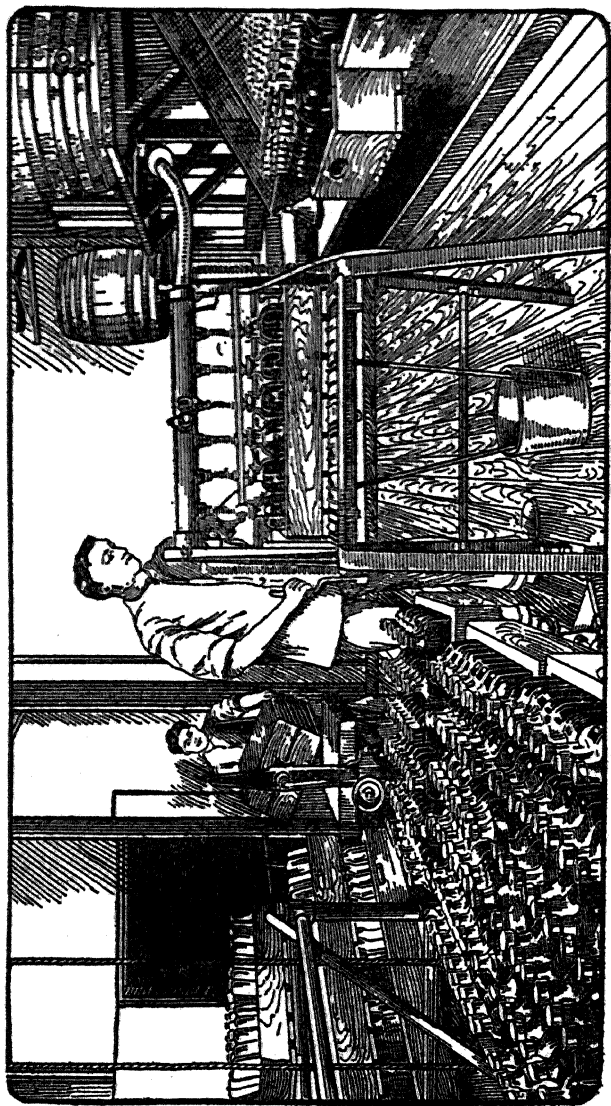
"I am sincerely glad you asked me that question," replied Mr. Pinkham, "as it gives me an opportunity to record a positive refutation of it. Our business has succeeded FROM THE BEGINNING. We dropped out for a while, but we have come to the conclusion that newspaper advertising and our business go hand-in-hand. Therefore, for the past eighteen months we have been at it again harder than ever. Oh, we believe in advertising—there is nothing like it! Goodbye, sir. Call again."

Novelty as well as sheer quantity distinguished Wetherald's output. He saw rich possibilities in *The Illustrated Ad* at a time when most of his rivals were stodgily content with running the same old-fashioned solid woodcut, year in and year out. His own line drawings were done by "some of the best black-and-white artists in the country and cost from \$15 to \$50," he remarked with justifiable pride. *Printers' Ink* was likewise impressed. "The Lydia Pinkham cuts are the best that are now running in the dailies," it decided. "The principal thing is

the life there is about them. They have action and motion; the artist has succeeded in producing realistic effects."

There was, for example, the agitated gentleman in stovepipe hat and cutaway, arms outstretched to support a lady inclined at a perilous thirty-degree angle. "*CAN I ASSIST YOU, MADAM?*" he cries. (The chaste explanation appeared below: "This is an every-day occurrence; she is taken with that 'all gone' or faint feeling, while calling or shopping. The cause of this feeling is some derangement, weakness or irregularity incident to her sex. It matters little from what cause it may arise; *instant* relief may always be found by using *LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND*.") But equally dramatic, in its own way, was the tableau composed of two seated figures, physician and female patient. "*I Followed Mrs. Pinkham's Advice and Now I Am Well,*" the latter has just revealed. Here the very immobility of the doctor served to emphasize the study in conflicting emotions that was his face.

Wetherald and Chas. H. made history in their respective fields; the business grew till it topped



The bottling room.

all other proprietary medicines. Many maxims, now elementary to the young advertising executive, may be traced to this combine. Daily papers are best, weeklies second best, monthlies a bad third. The evening paper is better than the morning edition; it goes into the homes. Work a small territory first and do it thoroughly. And so on. "Mr. Pinkham," Wetherald once reflected, "was what I call a natural-born advertiser. He had nerve and patience. He always figured that it required three years to make a territory profitable. The first year he looked for a loss, the second ought to about balance expenditures, and the third should show a profit. A great many people," he went on, "looking at a great business success, say, 'What lucky people!' I'll tell you there are very few who would be willing to go through what he did even to reach the success and the wealth which he attained. . . . If you want advice for young men entering the advertising business, there is no story I can tell that will be a more interesting example than the trials and hardships and final success of Chas. H. Pinkham."

The prevailing note in Pinkham advertising was a certain blitheness; the "fear" angle was repug-

nant to Wetherald. "Oh, bother the doctor!" an insouciant young woman advises a drooping female friend. "Get a bottle of Vegetable Compound, as I have done. I've been through this thing myself. Do as I tell you, dear."

Frequency and variety were what he relied on—"and we have to back it up with testimonials." Wetherald carried the use of these to new heights. The first Mrs. Pinkham had always known that her clientèle included the usual proportion of hypochondriacs, but she had had an unerring instinct for spotting them; and so had he. No matter what the carpers might say, hypochondriac and hysteria case histories never found their way into the published testimonials. Some of them, it was true, began rather suspiciously. "I was so nervous and irritable my people could hardly live with me. Sometimes I would almost fall down, I was so dizzy, and how I did lie awake at nights! I thought I should go crazy!" But—and this was the point—"NOW ALL THAT IS CHANGED." No true neurasthenic would conclude with the beaming assurance: "Today I am Real Well," or "To My



Great Surprise I Am Cured," or even, "I am Growing Hearty and Stout."

Wetherald's list was endless:

"I can walk miles now."

"I was prostrate; one bottle brought me out of bed, and three got me up so I could do the housework."

"Relief from the first bottle—"

"Your medicine is worth a dollar a drop."

The company made a standing offer of five thousand dollars to anyone who could prove that its testimonials were not unsolicited and absolutely bona fide, and of course it was safe in doing so; the only problem was to choose. One hundred thousand was the yearly average. And all printed specimens—some of which must have been of lively interest to the neighbors—were complete with names, addresses, and often photographs of the senders.

"*EVERY WOMAN KNOWS SOME OTHER WOMAN MRS. PINKHAM HAS HELPED,*" was another substantially verifiable statement; at least, if anyone had made a survey, it was fairly certain that every woman in the United States

could have named someone of her acquaintance who was diligently taking the Compound. "For a quarter of a century it has gone into every city, village and hamlet in our land, and into almost every country home. *Over a million* testimonial letters each tell some special story."

In 1898, when war with Spain was threatened, many national advertisers nervously canceled their orders. Charles Pinkham, on the contrary, decided that this was the time to plunge. He bought up nearly a million dollars' worth of space at bargain rates; next year the sales reached a new peak of over \$1,300,000, and the century ended on a high note of achievement.

Charles died in his middle fifties, rather suddenly, on November 10, 1900. There were nationwide obituary notices. "He was one of the most liberal advertisers in the world," the *Chicago Times-Herald* recalled. "From an exceedingly small beginning the largest business in the proprietary medicine line in the United States was built. Under his management the industry prospered, until now more than 400 employees are left who revere and

honor his name. Mr. Pinkham had no more devoted friends than those whom he employed."

A sharp internal crisis followed immediately upon Charles's death. The public gained its first inkling of this from an item in the local press.

### "TO FORM NEW COMPANY

*"Difference of Opinion in the Management of the Lydia E. Pinkham Company*

"The difference of opinion which has existed in the management of the Lydia E. Pinkham Compound Company culminated on Thursday, when the connections were severed between the company and several of the most trusted and competent employees. Upon the death of Charles H. Pinkham, William H. Gove and Mrs. Aroline Gove (the latter being the only surviving child of the late Lydia Pinkham), assumed control of the whole business, they being a majority of the Board of Directors. . . . As it was noised about the laboratory that these old and trusted servants were to go, there were indications of a general exodus of employees in several departments.

"It is understood that Mrs. Charles H. Pinkham

and others are now engaged in forming a new corporation for the manufacture and sale of a remedy similar to the Lydia E. Pinkham Compound. The articles of incorporation are now being drawn. It is likely that the persons whose relations have been severed from the old corporation will be engaged by the new one."

The developments leading up to this could only have occurred within a strictly family-owned concern. The distinguishing mark of family life, it has been said, is the number of things it takes for granted; and Mrs. Gove, the only remaining member of the original group, had innocently but firmly taken it for granted that henceforth control of the company would naturally devolve upon her. Mrs. Gove was a beautiful and rather impulsive woman (as the youngest child and only daughter in a family of strong personalities, she had probably had more of a struggle than anyone realized to keep from being completely submerged); Mr. Gove was a quiet, scholarly man, happiest in his library. As they now constituted the Board of Directors, they had unanimously elected Mr. Gove president and

general manager. No move was made to elect the widowed Mrs. Pinkham, now owner of half the stock, to fill the vacancy on the board.

But Charles had left, besides his widow, six children. The daughters, Lucy, Marion and Elsie, were seventeen, fifteen and nine years old respectively. Of the sons, Arthur was twenty-one, Daniel two, and Charles Hacker Jr. was an infant of four months.

The oldest son, Arthur, had decided early in life to become a doctor, and was just entering upon his junior year of pre-medical work at Brown University. No one gave much thought to him—quietly studying away, his chosen future all mapped out—or to his possible reaction to recent events. At this point, however, he emerged as a young man of formidable resourcefulness.

In addition, he had his full share of the Pinkham family feeling, and he felt his new responsibility as his mother's mainstay very keenly. In the <sup>late</sup> spring of 1901 he felt it his duty to relinquish his own ambitions and come home. The outlook was far from hopeful. His lawyers, after examining the company's bylaws and distribution of stock, re-

ported that even in the unlikely event of a Pinkham's being elected to fill the vacancy, he could be outvoted at every meeting.

However, he did hold certain cards.

For one, he had amused himself by taking private lessons from his chemistry professor on the manufacture and testing of the company products; and these, at a dollar an hour, had already saved the firm some \$50,000 in recovered alcohol.

It was shortly rumored that Mr. Arthur had set up a laboratory in one of the buildings on his mother's estate and had equipped it with tanks, pumps, filters and bottling machines. His operations were carried on with minimal publicity, but in the end it became known that he had turned out a product indistinguishable from Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound in everything but name. He knew the formula and process by heart, and neither, it may be remembered, was patented. As the best available substitute for the well-known name, he copyrighted his father's picture and signature. The firm had never had a salesman, accurately speaking, since the days when the three brothers had first set out in person with packs on

their backs; but Chas. H. Pinkham had known every dealer in the trade, and everyone in the trade had known Chas. H. The new product itself was christened the Delmac Vegetable Compound, the "Delmac" representing the first letters of the given names of himself, his brothers and sisters. Moreover the faithful Wetherald, whose loyalties remained firmly Pinkham, was prepared to launch it with an advertising campaign beside which all previous efforts would pale.

But the young entrepreneur still had one final trump in reserve. For a quarter of a century, the women of America had been invited to write not to a coldly impersonal company but to "Mrs. Pinkham, Lynn, Mass." Letters so addressed were arriving by the carload every day. And at present the only Mrs. Pinkham of Lynn, Mass. was his mother. The attention of the Lynn postmaster had been drawn to this incontrovertible fact. . . .

Shortly afterwards the Pinkhams' attorney was notified that a compromise might be possible. The Delmac Company was discontinued and the Pinkham Medicine Company reorganized. Mrs. Charles Pinkham was elected to fill the vacant third place

## LYDIA PINKHAM

on the board of directors. In 1901 her son Arthur was elected vice-president, secretary, and manager of foreign trade. Mr. Gove continued as president and general manager, Mrs. Gove as treasurer.

Under this arrangement the Family Venture thrived and expanded for another twenty years.

For one thing, under the new dispensation the foreign market was attacked with fresh vigor. "MRS. PINKHAM'S PATIENTS ARE FOUND IN EVERY CLIME," the advertisements came to state, with fair accuracy. "The Compound is a household name wherever civilization exists, and there is not a country without its multitude of grateful women, ever singing the praises of the cured."

Long ago the founder had observed modestly, "American ladies travelling abroad find the Compound invaluable. It sustains the energies in the most trying climate." Soon they could buy it anywhere on tour, disguised as *Le Rémède Végétal de Lydia E. Pinkham*, *Lydia E. Pinkham's Fräutermittel*, *Lydia E. Pinkham's Ört-Medicin*, *El Compuesto Vegetal de Lydia E. Pinkham* (para todas las enfermedades de las mujeres).

The Canadian branch was revived first. They



rented a laboratory in Montreal till they purchased their own plant at Cobourg, Ontario. The chief attraction here was an ivied red brick building, formerly a school, which with its well-kept lawns bore a distinct resemblance to the home plant at Lynn. Before 1910 they were also marketing in England, Holland, Cuba and Mexico.

As far back as 1881 the company had negotiated daringly with Spanish-American and Brazilian agencies, whose first advice (to change the color of their package to a vivid yellow calculated to catch the eye of the Señoras) was fair warning of the surprises and complexities they were likely to encounter. The factory in Mexico City was established in 1907 on La Viga canal, about a mile from the president's palace. Their Mexican experiences in the early period included earthquakes, storms, fires, inflations and revolutions (during one of which a street-fighter's bullet crashed through the window and accurately punctured a tank just filled with the Compound). In time there stood, from Panama City to Buenos Aires, billboards featuring exotic Latin brunettes, with the motherly New

England countenance of Mrs. Pinkham hovering above and slightly to the left.

After nearly two decades of experience in Spanish-speaking countries in Central and South America (where the window displays were wondrous), it was decided to enter Spain itself, and in 1920 a plant was opened at Barcelona. By this time they had conquered their early difficulties with idioms and colloquialisms, which could on occasion impart a very puzzling note to translations.

Each country presented special problems in the way of registration, licensing, exchange, taxes, agents, customs duties, printing, distribution, climate, literacy. Many of these applied equally to all manufactured products, but the Compound encountered a few that were all its own. Directors of public health had varying powers and standards, which might change drastically with a new incoming government. The extreme poverty in some countries might force the introduction of a half-size bottle. And advertising must be sensitive to local tabus and proprieties. Thus, in countries where masculine predominance was very marked, it was useless to open with the standard query

addressed to women: "Have you any of the following symptoms?" The Pinkhams learned to ask, instead, "Has your wife any of the following symptoms?"

In a different milieu, it was found in pre-1914 England that newspapers would not accept copy unless it were so excessively guarded ("How Phyllis Grew Thin") that it was hard to convey with any explicitness what their medicine *was*. The Pinkhams solved the difficulty by advertising their free textbook rather than the Compound itself. This gambit proved so effective that women were still writing in to request a copy up to the time of the second World War. Once having accepted a brand, the English remained stubbornly loyal to it.

Wars, civil and otherwise, often interrupted foreign trade. The first factory in Paris was set up, by particularly unhappy timing, in June, 1914. And by the time manufacturing there could be resumed, the value of the franc had fallen to 1 cent.

The Orient was invaded last. In 1922 the company translated its name into Chinese, Bing Hai being the closest approximation to Pinkham they

could find. The firm itself was now Bing Hai Tse Yao Kung Sau, or "Smooth Sea Manufacturing Medicine Company." But a Chinese name for the product was harder to come by. Numerous suggestions were made and the final choice was Bing Hai Sze Tai Tsai Shen Sui (Smooth Sea's Pregnancy Womb Birth-Giving Magical 100 Per Cent Effective Water). Under this title, however, their Shanghai representative belatedly discovered that only married women ever bought it. Accordingly the name was hastily altered to Bing Hai Sze Fu Koo Yao Sui (Smooth Sea's Women's Disease Medical Water), which raised no blushes.

Before deciding on a program in India, the company sounded out local chemists and doctors from Bombay to Calcutta. They were encouraged to make tests to demonstrate the values of the Compound and they proved most co-operative. But the preparation of booklets for Indian women presented language and caste problems of unparalleled complexity, particularly since, in any caste, the result must be approved by the authorities as "proper and valuable for young girls to read."

In the Pacific they had a small but steady busi-

ness in the Philippines, starting with Manila and the island of Luzon, branching later to Iloilo and Cebu to the south. Copy appeared first in English, Spanish and Tagalog, then in Visayan, the commonest dialect in the new territory. Leyte, Samai and many of the smaller islands were gradually included. As a result, what was regarded as the crowning triumph for their advertising was discovered in 1944 by an Army chaplain, Captain William B. Adams, who went ashore on one of the first South Sea islands to be liberated from the Japanese. When he developed the photographs he had taken, he came upon one showing a woman standing outside a thatched jungle hut, surrounded by her children and all her worldly possessions. The latter were meager indeed; but among them, there it was—a familiar, proudly visible bottle of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

By the time it came to be marketed in thirty-three countries, of course, the old simple days were over. New campaigns were launched and copy slanted with the aid of complicated charts and surveys on population density, race and even climatology. (Women in warm climates have more men-

strual pain than women in moderate and cold climates; but the colder the climate the higher the metabolism rate, and women in these zones suffer more from nerves.)

At home, meanwhile, the trusty testimonials had long since been discarded. So had recapitulations of the firm's history. No one was interested now in hearing that the Compound had once been made on a kitchen stove; at least, not to the extent of buying a bottle. Still, the nostalgic fact had not been quite forgotten, as appeared on Christmas Night, 1946, when the "Information, Please" experts were asked to identify a famous American business which had originated in a humble place.

FADIMAN: A Quaker lady's kitchen in Lynn, Massachusetts. (PAUSE) A very famous business was started in that most modest place. Mr. Kieran.

KIERAN: Well, Lynn, Massachusetts makes shoes. Was that a shoe manufacturer?

FADIMAN: An intelligent guess, but wrong, Mr. Kieran. (PAUSE) Anyone care to guess wildly as long as we've lost on that one already? (PAUSE)

L Y D I A P I N K H A M

I don't know whether any of you gentlemen have ever used Lydia Pinkham's Compound.

ALL: Ohhhh. . . .

ADAMS: Vegetable Compound.

SHEPARD: Let us sing. . . . Let us sing. . . .

KIERAN: There's a song about it.

FADIMAN: Can you sing it, Mr. Shepard?

SHEPARD: (Singing) Let us sing for Lydia Pink-  
ham

And her boon to the hu-  
man race. . . .

FADIMAN: Yes.

SHEPARD: How she made her vegetable com-  
pound

And the papers copied her face.

(APPLAUSE)

FADIMAN: Thank you.

SHEPARD: I'm shaky both in voice and words.

FADIMAN: I think that's remarkable. Yes, Lydia Pinkham started her business in this small kitchen in Lynn, Massachusetts.

In spite of modernized methods of distribution and advertising, the company somehow always con-

trived to retain the personal touch. This was due in part, of course, simply to long-established continuity. By 1925, the official fifty-year anniversary, one effective advertisement read:

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

*Mrs. Packard:* Time for your Pinkham's Compound, Eleanor.

*Mrs. Reed:* Mother, that sounds exactly like Grandma. Remember how she used to praise it?

*Mrs. Packard:* Yes, three generations in our family have relied upon Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. Some day you'll be giving it to little Marjorie.

The social scene reflected in their copy had greatly altered. The health of women was vastly improved; they were still prone to be "run down," but headaches were commoner than backaches or displacements, while many of the more gruesome ailments seemed to have disappeared altogether. Young girls were dancing, swimming, playing tennis and basketball; they were not as a matter of course "kept out of school" once a month. "School work, sports, dances and social affairs demand a



vigorous body. How discouraging it is to miss the good times. And how unnecessary!" The club-woman and the business woman had appeared in full force; as for the older woman, her prospects had never been so rosy. "With her children grown up, she now finds time to do the things she never had time to do before—read the new books, see the new plays, enjoy her grandchildren, take an active part in affairs. Far from being pushed aside, she finds a full, rich life of her own. That is, if her health is good."

At the half-century mark the company took to enclosing a questionnaire with each bottle inquiring: "Have you received any benefit from taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound?" Over three hundred thousand women took the trouble to answer, and 98 per cent said Yes. "This is a most remarkable record," was the company's justifiably pleased comment. "We doubt if any other medicine in the world equals it. It only goes to prove; however, that a medicine specialized for certain definite ailments—not a cure-all—made from a combination of nature's roots and herbs, can and does benefit 98

out of every 100 women who take it. Worth trying!"

In 1925 the firm grossed nearly four million dollars. But troubles were crowding thick and fast upon it. Federal and state regulations had been introduced and it was clear that they would increase in stringency as time went on. Empiricism, to give it the kindest name, would no longer suffice in advertising claims; these would henceforth have to be supported by chemical, pharmaceutical and clinical tests. Most of the conservative manufacturers of medical products ("ethicals") were bending strenuous efforts in this direction. But during the same period, an ironic fate prevented the Pinkham Company from engaging in any research whatsoever.

## IX



IN 1920 THE FIRM'S distinguished second president, the Hon. William H. Gove, died. He had not confined his interests to the company, having been a member of the Massachusetts legislature and author of the Gove System of Proportional Representation, besides finding time for his own more scholarly pursuits. It might be added that while both families had originally been Quaker, only Mr. Gove had actually begun life as a member of that faith, and he had remained above all things a peace-loving man. With his restraining influence gone, a high degree of rancor was for a time observable.

Money did not, as is usual in such cases, constitute the main point at issue. All the Goves and Pinkhams of this generation were traveled and cultivated people who lived very pleasantly indeed, and could have gone on doing so if their revered grand-

mother's Compound had never sold another bottle. But the history of the company was so much a part of them, and they felt such a peculiarly deep and personal pride in it, that not all their other financial interests put together could have consoled them for the loss of their own family business.

Once again the company was left with only two directors—Mrs. Gove, who was also the treasurer, and her sister-in-law, Mrs. Jennie B. Pinkham. They were both very beautiful women, somewhat regal of manner; each owned exactly half the business; and on no single point concerning it did they agree.

The resulting impasse, however, was comparatively brief. Mrs. Pinkham resigned the following year upon the election of her son Arthur as director and president. She withdrew with marked relief, not being formed by nature for controversy. Neither, for that matter, was Mrs. Gove, who had much natural sweetness and generosity, and who ended her days helplessly distressed at the spectacle of the happy Family Venture temporarily rent by dissension.

In an effort to find a workable adjustment of in-

terests, the attorneys for the respective families then began to draw up new bylaws. The result was not quite what had been hoped. As sometimes happens when two sets of legal minds are at work, the existing stalemate was not only confirmed, but was thoughtfully extended to cover a number of matters previously overlooked. By successive amendments the 112 shares of stock (the total issue) were divided into 56 shares of "Pinkham stock," so-called, and 56 shares of "Gove stock." Each class had authority to elect three directors, to be termed respectively the Pinkham and Gove directors. The president, first vice-president and secretary must always be Pinkham stockholders elected by the Pinkham directors; the treasurer, assistant treasurer and second vice-president must always be chosen by and from the Gove stockholders. Certain powers were to be exercised jointly by the president and treasurer, but only the treasurer or assistant treasurer could sign checks. No vote of the stockholders, finally, would be valid without an affirmative majority for each class of stock.

As if this—later to be described as "a consummate example of studiously designed corporate deadlock"

—were not enough, the attorneys at the last minute added provision for a veto. Any action of the directors, unless unanimous, could be vetoed by notice filed within ten days by the holders of a majority of the shares of either class of stock.

Ostensibly, of course, this protected the two families equally, than which nothing could be fairer. The trouble was, in the careful words of Judge Sidney St. F. Thaxter (for the family differences eventually reached the Supreme Judicial Courts of both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the state of Maine) that the whole arrangement, "though it may have had virtue from a sentimental point of view," assumed "a spirit of co-operation between the two groups which has not in fact existed. . . . It was designed to function in an atmosphere of harmony which is sadly lacking."

At any rate the proposed bylaws, extraordinary as they were, had been virtually agreed to by all parties when a last contretemps arose. Mrs. Gove expressed a wish for the position of general manager, which had been held by her late husband but was now vacant. Distracted scrutiny of the bylaws revealed that the directors had authority to elect

a general manager, but only with such powers and duties as might be expressly prescribed from time to time. In the prevailing exhaustion, the board accordingly solved its dilemma, or so it appeared at the time, by electing Mrs. Gove general manager, but refraining from assigning any powers or duties to her in this capacity.

The theory was that henceforth the Pinkhams would conduct the business while the Goves handled the finances. This was not at all what occurred in practice.

It must now be mentioned that of the four Gove children, only two were active in the company. The first was William Pinkham Gove, the purchasing agent, who was also in charge of packaging, printing and general advertising; a sound businessman, and something of an expert on tax law. The second was Lydia Pinkham Gove (Smith, 1907) who in 1922 at her mother's request became assistant treasurer. Her duties were not onerous. In any case, Mrs. and Miss Gove at this period were chiefly absorbed in the Lydia E. Pinkham Memorial which they were founding and endowing in Salem. It was a free baby clinic, equipped with every facility that

money could buy and staffed with specialists; the Goves did nothing by halves.

But in 1925 William Pinkham Gove died. The day after the funeral Miss Gove arrived at the plant with the air of one who had come to a major decision, and announced her intention forthwith of taking over all the departments he had held. Agitated protests were met with the brief explanation that she had inherited them.

Subsequent events revolved about the personality of Miss Gove. She was, like the grandmother for whom she was named, a strikingly tall, fine-looking woman of great ability. But where the first Mrs. Pinkham had been ever composed, Miss Gove's salient characteristic was intensity. Towards the family business she evinced a strongly proprietary attitude; and she could have managed a department of state with a mere fraction of the strategic grasp and tactical ingenuity she proceeded to display in her campaign to make the business her very own.

The first evidence of this was her growing disposition to interest herself in matters of administration, freely countermanding the president's instructions whenever she thought it advisable. The latter



on his part found himself increasingly hampered in his efforts to keep the company afloat by the frequent refusal of the two treasurers to pay bills that he had contracted, unless of course they personally approved them. (As everyone realized and as the Massachusetts court later found, "The defendant Aroline P. Gove is an elderly lady. She relies largely upon the decisions of her daughter, the defendant Lydia P. Gove, who is energetic and dominating.")

In 1927 a climax was reached with the death of the gifted Mr. Wetherald, whose agency had handled their advertising for nearly four decades. And at this point it was a really cruel coincidence that Miss Gove, again like her grandmother, should find in advertising an incomparable creative outlet.

To others in the firm, Wetherald appeared irreplaceable, but Miss Gove soon made it known that she favored "radical changes." Besides being crucial from the point of view of good will, large sums were involved. The company's advertising bill for the past fifteen years had averaged a million and a half dollars annually, three-fourths of which went to newspapers; and in addition it was issuing some thirty million booklets each year for house-to-house

and direct-mail distribution. But Miss Gove had in mind expenditures on a vastly more lavish scale, amounting in one year alone to 82 per cent of the gross sales. Also, since advertising was one of the departments she had inherited from her brother, she proposed in the future either to write or supervise all copy.

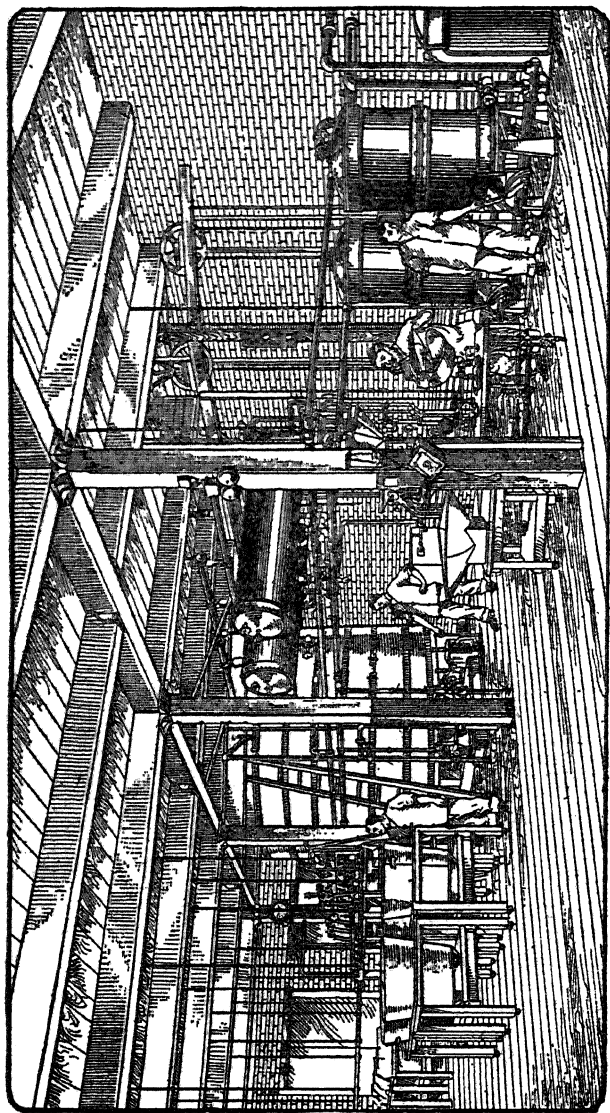
The previous summer she had chartered a plane to return from California (no woman before her had made a cross-country flight) and on her return had described the publicity resulting from her adventure in a letter to *Editor & Publisher*.

Lynn, Mass., Sept. 17, 1926

"First let me introduce myself. I am Lydia Pinkham Gove, granddaughter of Lydia E. Pinkham, assistant treasurer of the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company, and actively engaged in the management of the business in the capacity of advertising manager and purchasing agent. While travelling with my brother's widow, Mrs. William Pinkham Gove, and her three children, the idea occurred to me and the conductor of our little party, Rev. James Luther Adams, assistant pastor of the Second

Unitarian Church in Salem, to fly from Los Angeles, Cal., to Portland, Me., and land in Boston. Both Mr. Adams and I had enjoyed so much our flights from Los Angeles to San Diego, Riverside and Santa Barbara, that we decided immediately to cross the continent by airplane, and the next day we were on our way, leaving the rest of the party to proceed homeward by train.

"The experience was so thrilling, particularly when we left the air mail routes and flew across the Grand Canyon, that we decided either to return to California ourselves with the pilot or to send some friends back that they might enjoy a similar pleasure. Then an enterprising Boston newspaper, recognizing the stupendous news value of such a story, suggested that the choice of return passengers be settled by a contest. The *Boston Post* deserves all the credit of this idea. . . . My mother, Mrs. Aroline P. Gove, treasurer of the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company, is personally paying for the cost of the airplane. . . . But I will state right here that the Lydia Pinkham Gove's transcontinental flyers are making history rather than advertising her grandmother's famous Vegetable Compound.



The making room.

The news is first, the advertising is purely incidental.

“LYDIA PINKHAM GOVE,  
Assistant Treasurer.”

Despite the assurance in the closing sentence, Miss Gove was later inspired to issue ten million copies of a booklet entitled *Pinkham Pioneers*, in which advertising was much more than incidental. The account of her trip had a certain real interest; the primitiveness of the whole undertaking reads quaintly today. There was the engaging of the pilot; the flight in the open plane, averaging several hundred miles a day at most; the frequent landings for meals and gasoline; the fact that they never attempted to fly by night.

But in the booklet, Miss Gove's recollections of her hazardous flight filled only the upper half of each page. Then, without any break in the type other than a headline, would follow a testimonial for the Compound. Since the testimonials were oftener than not dramatic, and the startling unplanned effect was that of a continuous narrative,

*Pinkham* *Pioneers* became something of a collector's item.

As against this, the Gove stockholders were equally pained by the first radio program sponsored by the company when over their united protests a contract was entered into with the Voice of Experience, heard daily over more than sixty stations coast-to-coast. Regular listeners to the Voice learned that he had been familiar with Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound from earliest boyhood, his grandmother, sisters and mother (recalled as a pathetic sufferer from sinking spells and female disorders) having found welcome relief through its use. They also heard his views on such topics of the day as Repressed Desires, Honeymoon Hazards, The War of the Sexes, and The Divorced Woman's Dilemma. No matter who was in charge of Pinkham advertising, it seemed impossible for it to be dull.

In any event, disputes over advertising, which had done so much to make the company, now seemed in a fair way to break it. All manner of desperate expedients were tried. At one stage the advertising appropriation was divided between the

two families, to be spent as each thought best. Indescribable chaos resulted. Then, in 1929, they formed a house agency of their own to handle advertising. But since its stock like that of the parent company was owned equally by Pinkhams and Goves (and since they had taken the further precaution of duplicating its bylaws and division of officers) it came as a surprise to no one that this did not work.

By 1927 the situation had become threatening. The company was rapidly going downhill; no one could agree on policy and the various departments were pursuing their separate ways; sales had fallen off disastrously. Faced with this, and also with the prospect of litigation, the Pinkham and Gove stockholders placed one share each of their stock in a voting trust, to be administered by three trustees; and in a last hope of breaking the deadlock, they amended the battered bylaws yet again to provide for a seventh or "general" director. Several meetings were held at which all seven were present; and on June 7, 1927, they took the optimistic step of formally vesting executive authority in the president. The motion, duly passed and never rescinded,

read: "That the president of the company, as its chief executive officer, is hereby authorized and instructed to exercise general supervision and control over the various departments of the company's business, to hire and discharge all employees therein and to issue such directions as in his judgment are proper from time to time to carry out the votes of the board of directors."

This seemed to cover the ground adequately; but the Gove stockholders never recognized its validity in any practical sense. In 1932 the seventh director resigned, and neither the trustees nor the directors could agree on a suitable successor. They had, in fact, reached unanimous agreement on *any* point for the last time. The president continued to exercise the powers given him by the 1927 vote; the treasurer *et al.* continued to dispute his right to do so. The president contracted bills; the treasurer declined to pay them. Also the company was in the novel position of having a general manager in name but with no duties, and a president with all the generally accepted powers of general manager but minus the title.



Late in 1935 the long-suffering president deliberately, to provide a test case, entered into a contract with a reputable outside advertising agency. Miss Gove obliged by immediately notifying the agency that the contract was unauthorized and that they would not be paid. Early in 1936 a suit in equity was brought in the name of the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company against the Gove directors and officers to compel payment. The bill of complaint also prayed for relief from a long list of alleged breaches of trust and violations of the bylaws, and redress for many other grievances related.

Eminent counsel was employed on both sides; and the ensuing litigation was of great professional as well as human interest. It raised knotty questions of corporate law which since then have been frequently posed by law schools and bar examiners; and set a number of legal precedents which have been widely followed throughout the country.

Since the existence of an old and respected American business was at stake, the court moved with celerity. Three weeks after the bill of complaint

was filed, an interlocutory decree enjoined the defendants from "interfering in any manner with the conduct of the business by the president or its Board of Directors."

When this order was served on them, the defendants (who for convenience may be referred to as Miss Gove, their spokesman) made an offer for the Pinkham stock. The offer, described as "pitifully inadequate," was refused. Thereupon Miss Gove made good a long-standing promise and filed a receivership petition in Maine, where the firm was incorporated. She further moved that the Massachusetts court decline jurisdiction of the suit already begun there. This motion was denied. The record then became a dizzying list of demurrers and pleas filed and overruled, appeals from the interlocutory decree, and finally, an amended bill of complaint in which it was charged that the bill for receivership in Maine had been brought in bad faith. This motion was allowed, and the Goves were enjoined from prosecuting their petition in Maine until further order. A master was appointed to determine the facts, and the case was assigned for trial from day to day.

It unfolded, however, without the assistance of Miss Gove or her mother, who with aloof dignity sailed for Italy.

The next development was revealed in an *Associated Press* dispatch from Boston, dated November 28, 1936. "The thirty-six-year-old battle . . . for control of the \$3,000,000 patent medicine business founded by Lydia E. Pinkham went to Superior Court tonight with a master's declaration that the women had tried to force out the men.

"In a 14,000 word report Charles F. Lovejoy, the master, declared that Miss Lydia Pinkham Gove, granddaughter of the founder ' . . . entertained a desire to acquire all or some of the stock held by the men and so gain control of that corporation.'

"The Pinkhams, Arthur W., 59-year-old Lynn banker and president of the company, and his brothers, Charles and Daniel, are the men directors. All are grandsons of the original Lydia Pinkham, and for years all have been embroiled with their women co-directors in a dispute which originally concerned the amount of money to be spent on advertising.

"Because each faction controlled the same number of shares of stock, neither could gain the upper hand."

Some of the details in the master's findings were quite absorbing.

For years past, whenever the president had prevailed on the directors to meet, the vote had been three to three. When, as more commonly happened, the Goves remained away in a body, there had been no quorum.

"In September 1934," the master's report went on, "Lydia Gove stated to Arthur Pinkham that she was going to run the business, and that the Pinkhams must stop interfering with her doing so, or must sell out their interests; that if they would do neither, she would get herself appointed receiver, as, she stated, she could do, inasmuch as the company owed her a lot of money."

The piquant explanation was that some years back the defendants had loaned the company over a quarter of a million dollars of their personal funds for which, in their capacity as treasurers, they had

paid themselves interest at the rate of five per cent. One of the purposes of the present suit was to compel them to take repayment, as they had long been implored to do. But their loans had been forcibly continued, the master found, "as an excellent investment for themselves, as well as to retain a large creditor position toward the corporation, which they could use in the event that they decided to threaten or bring a receivership petition."

The case was attended by much publicity. From the *New York Times*, July 9, 1937: "Three grandchildren of Lydia E. Pinkham today won a victory in Massachusetts Supreme Court in their battle of 37 years with women relatives for control of the patent medicine business founded by the Quaker schoolteacher over 60 years ago. The full bench of the Court handed down a decision favoring the petition of the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company of Lynn for an injunction to prevent its treasurer, Mrs. Aroline P. Gove, only daughter of the founder, and its assistant treasurer, Miss Lydia P. Gove, Mrs. Gove's daughter, from interfering with the business." A further dispatch two days

later summed up the situation: "Henceforth the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company will be under male direction." This was in truth the net result, but it seemed rather hard that it should be put in just that way; considering that all their present woe dated back to the laudable desire of Chas. H. Pinkham to make his sister a full and equal partner.

There were further appeals; but after three years, during which the litigation was carried three times to the Full Bench of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, the interlocutory decree was made final. As a sort of epilogue, Miss Gove, whose unquelled spirit one could not but admire, discharged her original counsel without pay and moreover refused to sign company checks for the Pinkhams' counsel, seeing even less reason to compensate *them*. A suit against her in the first instance, and a court order in the second, had followed in due course.

She was now free, however, to continue with her receivership petition in Maine. (Mrs. Gove had died in May, 1939, at the age of eighty-two, and

was succeeded as treasurer by her daughter till the latter's death in 1948.)

Five months after the final Massachusetts decree was handed down, Gove stockholders brought a bill in equity asking for a receiver for the corporation and for certain other incidental relief in the Supreme Judicial Court of the state of Maine. Though the firm's balance sheet showed assets of well over a million dollars as against less than \$100,000 of indebtedness, and though the volume of business had approximately tripled since the first decision was rendered, it was claimed that the corporation was "in danger of being wasted and lost" and that its affairs were grossly mismanaged.

The main contention of the Goves' counsel, however, proved to be in the nature of a legal surprise. It was, in brief, that the corporation should properly be regarded as a corporate *partnership*. The meticulously equal division of stock, officers, powers, salaries and profits was cited in support. Although, and indeed because, the decision of the Massachusetts court giving power to the Pinkham president was conclusive and binding—so the argument

ran—this had thwarted and set at naught the basis of absolute equality on which the business had been founded; and its dissolution was therefore warranted.

Supplemented by a wealth of detail, this interpretation of the firm's status appeared to grow steadily more convincing till the seventh and last day of the trial, when Miss Gove was called to the stand. She testified that, yes, absolute equality of the two families had always been intended; adding that this had been repeatedly and uniformly endorsed by all concerned.

The Pinkham counsel's cross-examination was brief and, at first, puzzling.

On a day stated—June 18, 1937—had the witness's late mother reached the age of eighty years?

She had.

Had some of the friendly employees in the Pinkham plant sent her flowers on that occasion?

They had.

Had the witness written and signed a note of thanks to the thoughtful givers?

She had.



(A pasted sheet was then handed to her.) Was this the note?

It was.

The second paragraph of the long-forgotten note, entered in evidence as Def. Ex. 67, read:

"My mother's mother, Lydia E. Pinkham, arranged that the Gove interests should control the management of the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co. for as long a time as possible and her choice has been amply justified by the splendid record of success which has been attained until the present time."

As the significance of these words dawned upon all present, an alert observer in the courtroom noticed that Miss Gove's lawyer "cast at her as eloquent a glance as I have ever seen, and seemed to long to cast at her something far more tangible." For there, in a moment, went his whole promising case.

The Gove suit was dismissed with costs. And it said a great deal for the remaining Pinkham and Gove directors (who were one and all extremely intelligent people, with a well-developed though

severely strained sense of humor) that they promptly closed ranks and have functioned in complete amity from that day to this.

Miss Gove had always taken the position that since they already had more testimonials on file than they knew what to do with, clinical corroboration would be superfluous. But the first decision of the Massachusetts court in 1936 had allowed the company to set up a laboratory and hire research chemists; with, as it proved, no time to spare. Intensive work was begun, expense no object; the ingredients of the Compound were tested singly and in combination; the Compound itself was turned over to hospitals and clinics, where to eliminate the possibility of prejudice one way or the other, it was known to both doctors and patients as Formula X or the like. At the Pinkham plant, meanwhile, there was probably no spot in the world where shop talk was so largely (or at any rate so legitimately) taken up with the vagaries of the uterus.

As far back as 1892, Edward Bok as a public service had refused to accept further patent medicine advertisements for the *Ladies' Home Journal*,

and had gone on to indict a long list of products, freely purchasable in any state, as doped or otherwise dangerous. Samuel Hopkins Adams had followed with the sensational revelations of *The Great American Fraud*. In 1913, partly as a result of these campaigns, broad powers over labeling were given to the Federal Food and Drug Administration; and in 1914 the Federal Trade Commission was empowered to deal with unfair trade practices, including fraudulent claims in advertising.

So far the Compound had been little affected. In 1914 the formula was somewhat changed; dandelion and yellow gentian, the base of the bitter Swiss cordial, were added, but the main ingredients remained the same. About a year later the alcohol content was reduced to 15 per cent. The only result the company noticed was that sales soared as never before. They were also fortunate in that the new regulations had not forced them to discard one of their greatest assets, the time-honored name of their principal product. A Vegetable Compound was what the label said, and a Vegetable Compound it indubitably was. Finally, even when the nationwide campaign against the "Poison Trust" had been

at its height, the harshest critics of the Compound had never claimed that it did its users any actual harm. What they did assert was that it did no one any particular good, either; and that misguided women who depended on it might put off medical treatment till too late.

In 1921 the American Medical Association in its historic *Nostrums and Quackery* disposed of the Compound by citing an earlier analysis by volume made by chemists of the British Medical Association, showing it to contain so much alcohol, so much ash, solid matter, and vegetable extractive matter. But they had not tested the latter for any possible efficacy, merely stating that it "possessed no distinctive characteristics."

Near the end of 1925 the company encountered its first serious trouble with the authorities. The Food and Drug Administration formally objected to the wording on the Compound package. Though much less comprehensive in its claims than it had once been, it still covered a good deal of territory. At the factory all operations were suspended till new packages could be obtained, and employees

worked straight through Christmas Day rewrapping bottles. Under the new dispensation the Compound was "Recommended as a vegetable tonic in conditions for which this preparation is adapted"—whatever those might be.

Matters rested here for some ten years, till in 1938 they faced imminent catastrophe.

The Food and Drug Administration sent to the Federal Trade Commission its "Scientific Opinion" that the Compound was at best a mild stomachic tonic, and as such of no more benefit to women than to men. Two years earlier this pronouncement might have been fatal; but now, on the strength of the research so recently undertaken, the company was in a much stronger position. The Federal Trade Commission sent a copy of this "opinion" to the company, and conferences were begun. After more than two years of negotiation, with protracted hearings in Washington, the Federal Trade Commission and the company signed a stipulation, as a result of which the company was free to continue and to press its advertising claim that the Compound was a uterine sedative.

One curious disclosure was that there appear to be cycles of fashion even in drugs. Two of the drugs on which the Compound mainly depended—Aletris (True Unicorn) and Asclepias (Pleurisy Root)—had not only passed completely out of fashion but were almost forgotten, having been dropped from the United States *Pharmacopoeia* for over forty years.

As for the Compound as a whole, the findings were that when administered in the treatment of patients during the climacteric syndrome, it markedly decreased the number of vasomotor disturbances experienced each day (or as Mrs. Pinkham would have put it, women had fewer hot flushes when going through the Change); and that with patients who experienced menstrual pain severe enough to send them to clinics for relief, it appeared to “establish a normal rhythm in a previously arrhythmic contractile pattern, and to eliminate superimposed contractions on the normal contractile phase.”

The general reaction to this was intense surprise. Mrs. Pinkham would have experienced no such emotion, though she might have felt serenely

gratified to learn that science had at length caught up with her. After all, she had thought highly of science at a time when the neighbors did not. Her Compound could hardly do all that she had believed it capable of, but it could do one or two things quite well enough to explain its long and otherwise mystifying success through the generations. In or out of the ads, Mrs. Packard, Mrs. Reed and Little Marjorie might have gone farther and fared worse.

By far the most enlightening, if unexpected, result of the research program was the discovery that the happy users of the Vegetable Compound might have been enjoying something in the nature of estrogen therapy almost a hundred years before anyone heard the name.

Since no known hormonal factors were included in the formula, the newly engaged chemists found themselves considerably puzzled by the "specificity of hormonal therapy" noted in menopausal studies. They had unsentimentally assumed that the Compound would not be of much value in the treatment of this condition apart, perhaps, from improving

sleep, appetite and general health. But since the clinical reports were too consistent to be ignored, they finally felt warranted in investigating the bemusing possibility of estrogenic material somehow concealed in the Compound. A preliminary survey of the literature indicated that it was not, at least, beyond the realm of credibility. Research into the estrogenic properties of plants, a field which had barely begun to be explored, had nevertheless already revealed that a fairly wide selection—pussy-willow, sarsaparilla, wild cherry and yucca, among others—contained estrogenic materials, or principles capable of being converted into estrogens by chemical means.

At any rate, the results obtained on bioassaying extracts of the Compound by the usual methods were so electrifying that the investigators became more than ever severely skeptical, and the extracts were sent, under a code number, to two leading commercial laboratories for independent testing. Both laboratories (one headed by an internationally known figure in the field of endocrinology) confirmed their findings.



Having established that the Compound did contain estrogenic material in appreciable quantities, the chemists set to work with renewed impetus and eventually were enabled to determine that two definitely, and possibly three, of its ingredients were mainly responsible. By mid-1949, the task of isolating and chemically identifying the active principle of the most promising of these was nearing completion, and they looked forward to publishing a full report in scientific journals.

It was, of course, a far cry from the simple Eclectics of the last century. All that Mrs. Pinkham had noted, or Dr. John King before her, or some anonymous but experimental-minded Indian squaw long before *him*, was that certain herbs were nature's special gift to women.

Folklore and ballad, meanwhile, served to keep alive a widespread conviction that the Compound possessed mysterious potencies. Amherst's *Lord Jeff* (undergraduates from the first had been strangely fascinated by the whole subject) contributed the first three verses of the venerable but ever-renewed Lydia Pinkham Song:

L Y D I A P I N K H A M

*Tell me, Lydia, of your secrets,  
And the wonders you perform,  
How you take the sick and ailing  
And restore them to the norm?*

*Mrs. Jones of Walla Walla,  
Mrs. Smith from Kankakee,  
Mrs. Cohen, Mrs. Murphy  
Sing your praises lustily.*

*(Buy a bottle of your Compound?  
Not for me. A friend once, Lyd,  
Took a spoonful and I'd hate to  
Tell you what the damned stuff did.)*

*Lizzie Smith had tired feelings,  
Terrible pains reduced her weight.  
She began to take the Compound,  
Now she weighs three hundred and eight.*

*Elsie W. had no children,  
There was nothing in her blouse.  
So she took some Vegetable Compound;  
Now they milk her with the cows.*

L Y D I A P I N K H A M

*There's a baby in every bottle,  
So the old quotation ran.  
But the Federal Trade Commission  
Still insists you'll need a man.*

*&c., &c.*

*Refrain:*

*OH-H-H, we'll sing of Lydia Pinkham,  
And her love for the Human Race.  
How she sells her Vegetable Compound,  
And the papers, the papers they publish,  
they publish her FACE!*















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